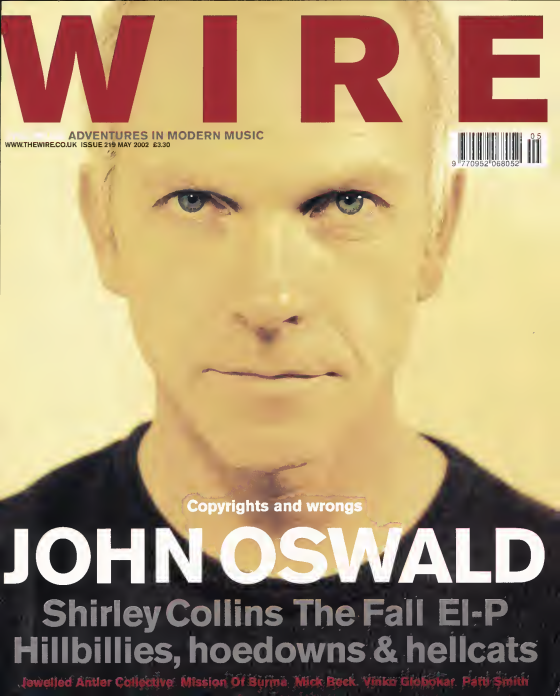


WIRED

ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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JOHN OSWALD

Shirley Collins The Fall El-P
Hillbillies, hoedowns & hellcats

Jewelled Antler Collective Mission Of Burma Mick Beck Vinko Globokar Patti Smith



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Produced by Ragini Puriya
Recorded by Dhanasri
Mixed by Ragini Puriya
Mastered by Ragini Puriya



AMMP

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Letters should include a full name and address



Swami Turiyengattasandhi aka Alice Coltrane

Shining light

It was great to see your lead article on Alice Coltrane (*The Wire* 218). Edwin Pountney conveyed his enthusiasm for her music well. What he didn't seem to know was that, in 1987, Alice Coltrane led a quintet that included Ravi and Orran Coltrane, Rashied Ali and Reggie Workman in a John Coltrane tribute concert at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City. She then brought the group to Europe and played one night in London at the Bloomsbury Theatre.

I went to this concert with my brother-in-law Andrew Rawlinson because he was then working on his *Book Of Enlightened Masters* in which Swami Turiyengattasandhi, as Alice Coltrane became known when she became a spiritual teacher in 1968, has a three page entry. We went backstage after the concert, during which the band had played many Coltrane standards in the style of his classic McCoy Tyner quartet, with Alice on synthesizer. We met her the next day when Andrew interviewed her about her teachings. She radiated a powerful beauty and calm, which your photos indicate she still has.

I was also very lucky to be in New York in the autumn of 1966 when John Coltrane gave what I think was one of his last concerts, at the Village Theatre, before the Ghatany concert you mention: a large group that included Pharoah Saunders, Jimmy Garrison, Reggie Workman, Rashied Ali and Alice Coltrane. They played "My Favorite Things" for over 40 minutes.

William Pryor via email

Don't hold your breath

Is there any explanation for RCA/BMG's apparent reluctance to reissue Chris McGregor's tremendous Brotherhood Of Breath albums which first appeared on vinyl in the early 70s and haven't been seen since? They would make an excellent mid-price double CD in the current RCA Victor Gold Jazz Series. A Ben Watson Primer on Chris McGregor and The Brotherhood Of Breath would be most welcome. Edwin Pountney's mainmoth article on Alice Coltrane was fascinating and Jake Walters's photography magnificent. Thanks for a wonderfully eclectic music mag.

Dave Taylor Purbrook, UK

Internationalist rescue

In Clive Bell's review (*The Wire* 218) of Cornelius Cardew/PLM's *We Only Want The Earth*, he mistakenly writes, "Hail Ireland Glorious Martyrs" goes, "Victory will be ours". Listen to that "ours", the educated British vowel gives the game away. In fact, the word is not "ours" but "hers" (Ireland as a young woman defied by perfidious Albion, it's an Irish songwriting tradition). I point this out because this error leads to a misunderstanding that becomes the basis of his political reective against the songs on Ireland in particular. The lyrics are at www.musicnow.co.uk/plm/

Unlike 99 per cent of English groups, in the mid-

1970s, PLM did play in the north of Ireland on several occasions including at the Prisoners Defence Club in Belfast. We even made page three of *Andersonstown News* (a newspaper funded by sales of the song "Men Behind The Wire", by the way). Simply to be Irish in mainland Britain in the mid-70s could cause you a problem - posters asking the public to inform on suspicious Irish men abounded in railway stations. The emphasis PLM placed on Ireland was in opposition to this propaganda barrage. We were asked to play at many demonstrations such as Anti-Internment, 1916 Easter Rising, PTA, etc by the Irish community. The group was arrested several times, including by the RUC. Our beloved Wurliizer E Piano and other equipment was damaged by police and on one occasion held for a week. Only Musicians' Union intervention got it released, but according to Clive Bell we were only "a bunch of spoilt Brits piggybacking on someone else's rebellion", so that would have been OK then.

Cardew translated the Chilean song "El Pueblo" into English and PLM popularised it, publishing the words and music in various songbooks, and performed it not as a "British assault on South American Musical Values" but as an act of internationalism, which obviously is an unthinkable thing to do these days. I understand Clive Bell's OTT comments are meant to belittle the songs, but they hide his lack of cognisance of the times when these recordings were made. "El Pueblo Unido" was recorded at an anti-fascist music/theatre event at the Unity Theatre, London. In



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Letters

the early hours of the morning following this concert this working class theatre was burnt to the ground, very likely by arsonists, depriving the artistic world of this historic venue.

The sketches for Cardew's solo piano work, *Sing For The Future* (1981), were written on prison notepaper, while in Penitentiary. He was granted release time for the occasion of the first performance of his work *Boulevard* for two pianos – he took his bows on stage at the Wigmore Hall handcuffed to a police officer. He also had the distinction of being the only composer to be banned from the House of Commons – this for showing anti-racist leaflets from the balcony during Enoch Powell's speech on the British Nationality Act in 1961, while announcing "this House stinks of racism" – he was released only after intervention by composer Alan Bush.

Far from being "a muddled dilettante", when Cardew was killed by a hit and run driver in 1981, he had been an active Communist for the last ten years of his life. The point about Modern is that he matured politically, eventually rejecting this influence from the early 1970s. He was always sincere and 100 per cent, and it is possibly this level of activity and commitment that cost him his life.

Laurie Baker Cardiff, UK

End point

Congratulations to Kodwo Eshun for a well presented take on *Boards of Canada's* *Geogaddi* (Soundcheck, The Wire 218). However, it seems that someone cut off the last 1000 words of Eshun's review just as he gets into the thick of talking about the record at hand. While the overall graphic boldness of *The Wire* is one of its strongest suits, maybe you could have made the picture below less review smaller so as to let him finish his thoughts?

Lee Isles Ipswich, USA

Dirty boots

Credit to the citation of *Stars On 45* as a critical piece in Peter Shapiro's history of bootlegging (*The Wire* 218). However, I'm sure I'm not alone in noticing the unforgivable omission of *Jive Bunny And The Mastersmokers*. Any chance of a Primer?

Ben Dyson York, UK

Cover grrrrs

It seems *The Wire's* been on a roll of showing females on your covers this year. I like when you appear to be consciously propelling some feminist ethics by making sure to feature at least some large and small stories about female musicians. But why did you single out Kim Gordon for the cover shot on the story about

Sonic Youth (*The Wire* 217)? I love that group because they're all pitching into the sound. Perhaps she was the only one available for a photo, as Steve Shelley wasn't involved in the interview. But I really hope you guys weren't referring to those some old female image exploitation industry games (pretty lady on the cover catches more eyes and sells more copies) that too many mixed gender bands like Sonic Youth have had to put up with (see the covers of your crotch American rivals *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*). I am sick of seeing that same promo photo of Gordon playing bass in a short striped dress (you know the one: platinum hair, thighs...) once Goo and Dirty solely advertising for all the members of the band on theirs and its articles. Thanks for the article (and SY, thanks for the good pickup ATP was incredible), but I have to question such a proudly progressive/underground/experimental magazine's cover girl motives.

Erika Amherst, USA

Closer to infinity

Regarding your mention of Lee Ranaldo's *From Here To Infinity* in the Sonic Youth Primer (*The Wire* 217), some may be interested to know that they may not have to go to the Lee Ranaldo compilation to hear samples from it. A 30 minute CD version was released by SST in 1988. As Ranaldo's sleeve notes say, the "compact disc version contains tracks taken from the original master tapes, as well as from the LP version, in situations where the tracks were created directly in the mastering studio and no tapes existed. Some new tape loops have been cut to replace certain lock grooves which, due to the chance nature of the process, I wasn't altogether happy with on the record". Coincidentally, the artwork on the CD was done by Savage Planet.

Andrew Goldsworthy Canberra, Australia

Tavistock take

Trevor Barre (*Letters*, *The Wire* 217) may have got his wires crossed: I believe there is a Tavistock Institute (in the USA?), which, as far as I am aware, does research on organisational and individual behaviour in the area of management and business studies. Not to be confused with the Tavistock Clinic, of course.

Rory Manchew Sydney, Australia

Bell ringing

I was shocked by the unfairness of Clive Bell's attack on the duo record by Joëlle Llandré and Kazuo Sawai, *Organo-Mineral* (*The Wire* 216). Even more so as I have found his output as a writer and a musician consistently thought provoking. He has the obvious right to dislike the record, but I think that the review

becomes an attack on the persons who made it. The phrase, "When these musicians chuck their toys out of the pram and improvise", joined with a very partial account of both musicians' careers, is imprecise and it might lead the reader to think that this is their first attempt at improvisation, in contradiction with the overview of Llandré's career in the invisible Jukebox feature of the same issue. To which I'd only add that she recently spent much time in Japan working with different musicians, making this duo not a casual attempt at 'World Music'. About the 'myth' about these highly trained musicians' quest for freedom and its sentimental nature, I am at a loss to understand Bell's observation. Llandré renounced a career in academic music in order to follow her inspiration as an improvising musician, making the world's improvisation movement all the richer for that. Finally, music is made out of the fact that these ladies are playing 'forcefully', slapping strings and thrusting sticks into the instruments. This description covers only a small fraction of what happens in the CD, but since when has this been an aim in the book of European improvisers, free jazz players or the London Musicians' Collective anyway? Or is it that they should be playing 'delicately' to conform to an outside model that unfortunately is not on their agenda? I don't know if Bell didn't take the time to listen properly, if he tried to force the music on this record into a scheme of his own concoction, or if it's simply something he ate. The fact is that his review does a disservice to the readers, it's unfair to the players and doesn't show any of the insight and sensitivity that Llandré herself demonstrated in her invisible Jukebox answers.

Francesco Martinelli Pisa, Italy

Morris man

OK, now I get it, Dave Tompkins is obviously a pseudonym for Chris Morris. I don't know how you persuaded Morris to do it, what with him being notoriously hermit-like, but still... If you don't believe me, try imagining one of Tompkins's *Hightop* reviews being read out by the posh BBC announcer bloke who does the 'dance news' spoofs on *Blue Am*. From now on I will read 'Dave Tompkins's' reviews in the spirit in which they were written – as brilliant comic parodies.

Keith Coyne via email

Corrections

Issue 218 In the Alice Coltrane feature, due to a transcription error, the jazz composer/pianist Todd Dameron was referred to as 'Ted Cameron'. In Mike Barnes's On Location review of the Gareth Williams Memorial Concert, due to a subbing error it was incorrectly stated that the concert ended with a rendition of a song from Williams's *Flaming Tunes* album. It actually closed with the set by Wire. ☺

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The Wire 220: on sale from 23 May

Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler

The SANH clause: Sonic Arts Network honoree Karlheinz Stockhausen

The Belgian **Sub Rosa** label is about to release the first instalment of a planned seven-volume series of double CDs covering the history of electronic and noise music. *An Anthology Of Noise And Electronic Music Volume 2* includes pieces from Luigi and Antonio Russolo, John Cage, Walter Ruttmann, Pierre Schaeffer, Iannis Xenakis, Gordon Mumma, Nam June Paik, Pauline Oliveros, Konrad Boehmer, Sonic Youth, Ryoji Ikeda, Survival Research Laboratories, Einstürzende Neubauten and many, many more. Roughly half of the material featured in the series has been previously unreleased >> **Frank Tovey**, aka Fad Gadget, died of heart failure on 3 April at his London home. Tovey was the first signing to Daniel Miller's Mute label, and with singles like "Ricky's Hat", "Back To Nature" and "Collapsing New People", he was one of the pioneers of post-punk electronics >> In conjunction with the ICA, Mactwo-sound, the tour promotion wing of Mactwo distribution, will produce a festival devoted to contemporary jazz, electronica and HipHop from Norway. The festival, courting disaster and bad puns with the name **Fertiliser: Good Shit From Norway**, will run from 7-13 October >> The American **Thirsty Ear** label is instigating a small series

of collaborative, 'man meets machine' CDs, in the pipeline are records featuring Anti-Pop Consortium vs Matthew Shipp; DJ Spooky with Shipp, William Parker, Guillermo Brown and Joe McPhee; and Spring Heel Jack with Derek Bailey, Han Bennink, Kenny Wheeler and Jason Pierce from Spiritualized >> U-Sound Archive is a series of CD-Rs curated by **Jackie O Motherfucker's** Tom Greenwood and Josh Stevenson from Cast Exotic Archives. This **Dick's Picks** of the American underground focuses on artists associated with the U-Sound installations, including Jackie O Motherfucker, Decaser Pinga (aka Prick Decasy), Tam Barnes, Dylan Nyoukis and Soaked Plain, and guests like Neil Campbell, Tara Jane O'Neil, Daniel Carter and Toro Burgay >> The **Wave** has teamed up with some of the leading lights of the West Coast electronica posse (Tigerbeat6, Context, Orthionik Musik, Incomplete, Gold Chains, Philip Sherburne and CommonSpace design) to form a monthly space for live electronica and visuals in San Francisco. The **Trouble Club** will gather both new and established talent under one roof, more specifically that of The Great American Music Hall. Point your browser to www.musork.com/trouble and

www.thewire.co.uk/news for regular updates on what's on >> The Sonic Arts Network has recently announced that **Karlheinz Stockhausen** has become the first Honorary Patron of the organisation. To mark the composer's association with the sound art organisation, SAN is staging a competition, with the prize being a place on the summer composition and interpretation course at the Stockhausen Foundation of Music in Kürten, Germany. The competition is open to "all composers, interpreters, musicologists and music lovers regardless of age". To enter, submit a 1500 word article about an aspect of Stockhausen's life or work to Rachel@sonicartsnetwork.org. The winning article will also be printed in a future edition of the SAN magazine, *Diffusion* >> Those Japanese furry freak brothers **Acid Mothers Temple** must have been paid well for their recent live soundtrack to anime classic *Legend Of The Overfiend* at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. Makoto Kawabata and friends dimmed their post-movie set with a good old fashioned trash fest, smashing instruments before walking off. Nice of the bassist to snap the head off his instrument moments before handing it to a moshing fan in the front row. □



Death Row

How would Otomo Yoshihide spend his last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

Three records

Kyu Sakamoto *Best*
(Japanese pop singer from the 60s)
Jim Hall & Bill Evans *Undercurrent*
I can't decide on the last one

One film

Conte 55-go-no-Koshunuke-Bishido
It is very infamous Japanese Boomedie film from the 60s. I saw it when I was 9 or 10 years old and it was the funniest film ever. After that I've never had the chance to see it, even the title is uncertain. I want to check it again to see how funny it is before the end of the world

One book

Kenkaku-syoubai by Ikenami Shyotaro

Famous long samurai novel from 1970-80s. Maybe it is too long to finish in one day

Three visitors

Just my girlfriend

Last meal

Soba noodle at Uesugi (best soba restaurant near my apartment in Tokyo, Kichiyoji)

Final message for the world

No idea. I don't know what 'The World' is.

Music for the funeral

Play long feedback until the end with my Gibson ES350 and Fender amp or improvisation with Taku Sugimoto, Anyangany Tetsuy, Nakamura Toshimaru and Sachiko M at Off Site in Tokyo. □ Otomo tours the UK this month with the CMV's turntable Hell package: see Out There



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When Michael Azzerad included Mission Of Burma alongside Black Flag and Sonic Youth in his landmark book, *Our Group Could Be Your Life: Scenes From The American Indie Underground 1981-1991*, he confirmed something that the group's fans had known all along: American rock music wouldn't be the same without the Boston group's brief existence. Even though, as Azzerad writes, "Mission Of Burma's only son was bad timing," they accomplished enough in their four-year stint to leave a substantial legacy. Formed in Boston's proto-underground scene in 1979 — as an epoch guitarist Roger Miller has called "pre-postpunk" — the quartet released a handful of influential records, challenged the strictures of the nascent hardcore scene by loosing their abrasive songs with angular constructions and proto-ambient tape loops, and encircled the U.S. blazing a trail for generations of underground groups to follow.

Their contributions have long since been absorbed into the mainstream, but one listen to their music suggests that they weren't so much ahead of their time as outside it entirely. "Fame And Fortune," from 1981's *Signals, Cuts, And Marches* EP features the martial snarls and nervous guitars that would come to define American "college rock" of the 1980s, but sits it throat to belly with jagged-odd feedback, letting the song's merrits come spilling out in a pool of noise. 1982's "Mica," featuring sheets of guitars crumpling into glistering shards, guardedly anticipates the 'Emo' hysterics of ten years later.

However, in 1983, facing dwindling airplay, shrinking crowds and Miller's worsening tennis, they abruptly called it quits. Ryko's 1988 reissue of their lone album, *Vs.*, along with a handful of early singles — including the anthemic "That's When I Reach For My Revolver," which Moby would improbably cover in 1997 — cemented their reputation as one of the great groups that most of us never saw.

In 2002, however, that reputation might have to change. Mission Of Burma have reformed, with a tour appropriately named *Inexplicable 2002*, playing sold-out shows in Boston and New York. Steve Albini's group Shellac even invited them to play at All Tomorrow's Parties (Martin Swope, the group's

enigmatic tape loopist, declined to rejoin the group, so Shellac's Bob Weston has taken over tape loop duties.) The group members seem just as flummoxed by their return as the fans confronting a 19-year gap in the group's online database of live shows, which leaps from Show 367, Saturday 26 March 1983 with PL at Staten Island's Paramount, to Show 368: Thursday 10 January 2002 at Somerville, Massachusetts's 808 Club. Asked why they got back together, bassist Clint Conley says, "None of us has been able to put our finger on it — that's really the honest answer."

While they remained on good terms after Burma's demise, they had gone resolutely separate ways. Conley all but gave up music, raising a family and pursuing a career in television production. Miller, going easy on his ears, founded a succession of projects like *Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic*, utilising acoustic and prepared instruments, and the slightly rockier *No Man*. After co-founding *Birdsongs*... with Miller, Swope relocated to Hawaii. "He's kind of given up on Western society," says Conley, laughing. But then, the shadowy fourth member of the group, who never appeared on stage and shrank from the spotlight, "was barely attached to Western society to begin with." Peter Prescott was the only Burma veteran to continue his rock career, playing in Volcano Suns and later, *Mazdarack's Customized*.

They do agree that a "constellation" of events conspired to make the unthinkable thinkable. The invitations to reform rolled in every year, but in 2001 a promoter invited them to appear at New York's hall of high culture, the Lincoln Center. Miller says it's as good a catalyst as any — one of those moments where everyone suddenly said, "Why not?" Conley, typically self-deprecating, paints an amusingly naked picture of the decision. "Quite frankly, I was impressed by the glory of it all. I thought, wow — in a few years nobody's going to give a shit, so you might as well grab a gig at Lincoln Center. It was pure vanity and glory whoring." Conley, you'll recall, has a deadpan sense of humour.

They had already played together, though, supporting Peter Prescott's *The Peer Group*, who opened for Wire in 2001, so they knew the essence was there — all

they needed to do was regain their chops. Conley hadn't picked up a bass in years, and made the initial mistake of trying to relearn their esoteric changes by playing along with old live recordings. "Parabolically Roger's [songs]," says Conley, "there were definitely times during rehearsal where we'd just be looking at each other with blank expressions." Opening for Wire created its own incentive to relearn what they had left behind two decades ago. Says Miller, "You know, we're just pathetic dolts. And they were as good as they could be... I think Clint actually cited that as being a reason — 'look at those guys! They're up there, and they're all older, and they're playing with the same conviction that they ever did, so maybe we can do it too.' Now, I didn't feel like that. I have a different way of looking at things — that had no effect on what we could or couldn't do. But I was still like, God, this is no shoddy rehash."

The current post-punk revival — in name, at least — and resurgent interest in arty rock makes Mission Of Burma's return exceptionally timely. "There certainly are a lot of people getting back together again," says Conley, citing Television's recent appearance at Irving Plaza. "I'm sort of embarrassed that we're part of something. I mean, don't get me wrong, I love Television. I worship them actually. I'm happy they're together. But the idea" — says the family man, who has called himself "Mr Suburban Dad: I do carpools, I clean the garb cap" — "still kinda troubles me."

In fact, coming out of nowhere has its advantages. I ask Miller, who professes not to listen to rock any more, what he thinks of re-entering "the industry" at a time when retro acts like The Strokes are heralded as rock's second coming. "It just makes us look better, really," he says. "Because, so people say, we sound as if, having folded in March 1983, it's April 1983. Live there was nothing missed. I feel completely good about the music we're playing; I just think it makes us look better than we really were because everything else is so lame. It just burnishes us right up." *Signals, Cuts, And Marches*, *Vs.*, and *The Homble Truth About Burma* are rereleased by Rykodisc. Mission Of Burma play All Tomorrow's Parties at Camber Sands this month: see *Out There*

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Mick Beck has been causing jaws to drop at London's Klinker Club, no easy feat considering the level of creative insanity which occurs there on a weekly basis. He's done it by playing a bassoon, often as part of Hugh Metcalfe's Microtantal Megastars. This unwieldy ancient instrument, a kind of contra-bass oboe, has a distinctly medieval aroma, with a burning sound somewhere between a bumblebee, a sackbutt and a bottom-end stylophone. Its twin-reed mouthpiece requires a tighter embouchure than the single reeds of clarinet and sax, and the effort required to send wind through the tiny aperture transmits something comical and ineptic to the resulting sound. You can almost hear the player turn and swell up with frustration. So hearing Beck playing it with hard-boiled vehemence and rocooco improv weirdness is a shock, even when competing with Metcalfe's 'death to serious culture' guitar and Alan Durrant's anti-magistic electric bass. The bassoon, barking and a sense of humour seem to be the pertinent recipe for Beck's own musical Renaissance.

His reputation was established on tenor saxophone. His trio *Something Else*, with the formidable rhythm section of Simon Fell (bass) and Paul Hession (drums), released two CDs on Fell's Bruce's Fingers label – *Start Moving Earbuds* (1993) and *Playing With Tunes* (1996). Both CDs revealed an amazing fluidity and force, plus a perverse sense of humour.

Born in 1947, Beck played jazz in the early 60s, then gave up music for maths and philosophy at Nottingham University, a return to what he calls "ordinary education" (bored from childhood, Beck was born at a time when a philosophy of "segregated schooling" applied). He returned to music in the late 70s. "I thought I'd probably feel a more fulfilled person if I took up playing again," he explains. "I was in London and took a year out of administration and did more or less full-time music. From about 1980, I started doing national tours."

Beck and percussionist Will Evans – an emotive player with a comparable impact, though different style, to Jamie Muir – played at Derek Bailey's Company Week at the ICA in 1984.

"Company Week was great," Beck recalls. "I thought I was ready for some really challenging players, and getting to know Derek more at that time was a real boon. By London standards the audience was quite lively. One thing that stands in my memory was watching Steve Beresford and Derek do a duo the first night, and finding it the most funny thing that I'd ever heard, with some serious musical input as well. Humour's always been a thing in my music. I think how very funny Hugh Metcalfe's renditions of music can be, and the power that has for me. It touches some deep emotions. When Hugh came to Sheffield on tour I'd join his groups – Buryak with Bob Cobbing and [voluntarist] MacLau Bangerter was a memorable example. The connection with Derek lasted through until about 1988, when I played at Company Week again and did a BBC broadcast with Derek and Gavin Bryars (bass), Phil Wachsmann (violin) and Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista, who then spun off into world tours with Paul Simon."

Bailey's concept of 'non-dramatic' improvisation is notoriously critical of attempts to revive jazz. I ask Beck if the music played by *Something Else* caused a parting of the ways.

"For Derek I probably remained too near the jazz spur to be somebody he'd want to interact with longer term," he replies, "but for me it's always been important to have access to rhythm and melody as well as the more extended techniques of classical free playing. These days, if I interact with people like Pat Thomas or Matt Wand, that's an element I allow to come to the fore."

I ask whether Beck's turn to bassoon was a similar manoeuvre; a means of outwitting technique.

"There's an element of 'let's do something hard', though it's not just perversity. There's lots of good saxophones. The saxophone is fairly easy to play. Not many people have done anything interesting with the bassoon. I pulled out of doing office work in 1998. Part of the rationale was that I shall now play music until my strength for carrying the instruments around diminishes, or my dedication goes. I shall channel a lot of energy into it. I'll take up another instrument – what if it

be? The most obvious things were other members of the saxophone family, or bass clarinet – you can't move for bass clarinetists in Berlin. I thought I'd do something different. Four years into the bassoon, it is still a fucking hard instrument. You can get something out of it, but to get really fluent it's hard. I'm only just now getting to feel like I play on the saxophone. To be moving into that domain is really exciting."

In his duet CD with pianist Stephen Grew (*Picture August on Bruce's Fingers*), Beck runs the gamut from fleet but changes to overblown motifs lacking discernible pitch. How easy was it to switch from 'animal cry' type playing to note values?

"The phrase 'animal cries' is very evocative," Beck agrees, "it's about getting to primal emotions. If you think of Eric Dolphy's *At The Five Spot*, the big long solo on 'The Prophet'... he does some of that stuff there. When I heard it, it went so deep into my soul. I thought it was absolutely fantastic to be able to draw on that kind of deep primal stuff as well as relating to the chord sequences and notes he's dealing with."

Mick Beck may refer to Dolphy, but he's not locked into jazz. The *Pretty Exciting Trio* with Matt Wand (best known for his work with Stock,hausen & Walkman) and Paul Hession takes up the challenge of state of the art amplified splatter groups like Konk Pack and Bark!; music where fervent recklessness and stop-start swing make you relish the most barbaric and widely-sourced cacophony. Beck has impressed on bassoon in a trio called Beck/Drenching/Pleasure, with Stu Cullen (diaphanous) and Marie-Angele Bueller (amplified brooks) from the Middle Class Records/Pence Eleven axis (reviewed in *The Wire* 214), and has collaborated with Squarespusher. His tenor playing was notable for the way it could swerve between sweet melodies and truly nasty, cutting blasts: as Philip Clark has noted (*The Wire* 217), Beck is now getting something personal and unheralded out of the bassoon – he promises that he is going to "bring the instrument out from under its petticoat by playing my heart out in shopping precincts and seaside resorts" Beck/Drenching/Pleasure's *Live At HDTS-00* is out on Middle Class Records



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The four-way dialogue between Finnish orchestra, Norwegian jazz quartet, Swedish choir and rumbling electronics heard in Vinko Globokar's 1986 composition, *Halo? Do You Hear Me?*, could well stand as a metaphor for its composer's life and work. With each component housed in its respective national broadcasting studio, Globokar oversaw the piece from behind the mixing desk, blending and telescoping the sounds as he received them from afar. The music becomes a parable for society and could only have come from the pen of a man who proudly says, "I belong nowhere".

Immigration and the cross-fertilisation of different performance practices haunt Globokar's music, while imbuing it with purpose and a technical rationale. His colossal triptych, *Les Emigrés* (1982-86), again involves symbolic interaction between massive orchestral forces and the apparatus of jazz, with sung and spoken multi-lingual texts taken from the letters and diaries of immigrants discriminated by the culture and linguistic rituals of their new country. Globokar himself should know: he was born in France in 1934 of Slav parentage but spent his teenage years in communist Yugoslavia. He later returned to France and has also spent significant periods of time in the United States and in Italy. He currently lives in Berlin, but is clear about what his own experience of being an immigrant means to him.

"I am not a poor immigrant, nor have I suffered particular misery, but when I'm composing I always have a theme on which I want to work," Globokar explains. "It can be a question, a protest, something political or psychological and when I decide this theme it conditions every aspect of my work. The choice of the tools and techniques, and of the musical material grows out of the consequences of this extra-musical concept. I may have to invent a new technique or quote one that already exists, but my interest lies in

being able to transpose something that has nothing to do with music into musical thinking. I occasionally have to use film or text to continue the argument if my material is impossible to translate into music, but I'm not the sort of composer who has sounds in their head – for me the music comes quite late in the planning of the piece."

This is probably contrary to the method of every other composer you could mention. Globokar is even uncomfortable with the politicised schema of a Luigi Nono or Helmut Lachenmann, fearing their work uses politics as a form of self-justification. "For them musical material has value on its own terms," he says, "but for me music is a tool which I use to express something that is more important than the music itself. A theme like immigration therefore becomes an archetype of humanity."

When Globokar returned to live in Paris in 1955 he had his mind firmly set on becoming a jazz arranger and trombone soloist. He was inspired by JJ Johnson and Frank Rosolino, and even had counterpoint lessons from the doyen of French jazz writers, André Hodeir. But he eventually found big band arranging and working on film scores too limiting and set out to "improve himself", taking conducting lessons with René Leibowitz and becoming a pupil of Luciano Berio. Berio's ideas about collage and his approach to music and text has left an indelible mark on Globokar's own thinking; but he has learnt important lessons from his life as an instrumentalist and improviser. "I use the trombone very rarely in my music because I know it too well and I hate using instrumental clichés," he declares. "I'd rather write for instruments that I don't know, then I can discuss with the players the limits I can push them to."

Globokar has developed an enduring partnership with clarinetist and saxophonist Michel Portal, but remains wary about the presence that composition and

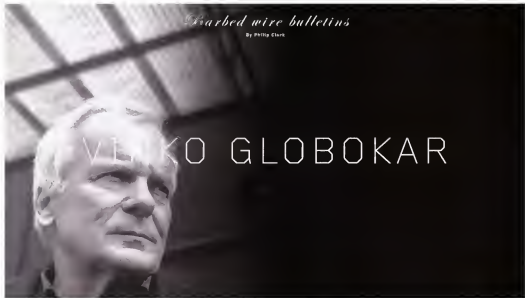
improvisation are different sides of the same coin. Globokar asserts that when he improvises, "I do so in a completely free way and I'm in an equal relationship to the other musicians. But when I compose, I'm debating what it is I want to say. I would never put a section in a piece to be improvised unless I know the musician involved. And this becomes a very moral question – if someone knows how to improvise, why should they want to put their own music into my work?"

Despite the distinction in Globokar's mind between these two disciplines, he relishes the random heat and energy produced when separately composed sections of rigorously crafted music are performed simultaneously. His *Der Engel Der Geschichte* (2000) involves two orchestral groups symbolically separated by a barbed wire fence. As Slovenian folk music blossoms in the final moments of the work, Globokar's belief in the timelessness of his own Italian heritage becomes clear, a statement at the same time musical and political. Although Globokar's earlier orchestral scores, *Labour* (1992) and *Zlom* (1997), are more fixed, there remains the air of an unknowable correlation existing between two worlds. *Zlom* has an undercurrent of clandestine activity, while *Labour* pivots on a recurring chord around which other material spins.

"In my orchestral works I am no longer interested in the counterpoint between note to note, but rather between one orchestral mass and another," he says. "I'm fascinated by the fact I can't control what happens when both orchestras come together, but if the material I provide the players with is healthy and complex then so will the result. I'm not interested anymore in writing music where I can hear everything I wrote." And that's another statement few composers would dare utter. | *Zlom*, *Oblak*, *Semen* and *Discours* II are out now on Sargasso; *Labour* is available on Col Legno. Thanks to John Warnaby

Barbed wire bulletins

By Philip Clark





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Global Ear: Aleppo

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Malu Halasa finds custom struggling to accommodate modernity in the musical life of Syria



The road to Damascus; oud maestro Juan Karajouli

Seemingly maniacally in a white van, Ibrahim Sukkar, Syria's premier oud builder, is speeding in a midnight chase through Aleppo's medieval streets to his factory. Beside him sits Juan Karajouli, the country's best known soloist on the oud, the droning, lute-like instrument. Despite the late hour, the city's markets and restaurants are buzzing, even the gyms are open — it's not clear when Syrians actually sleep. As the van swerves and skids, the men are in deep negotiation. No one knows the outcome. No one even knows exactly why the hurry; this is just the stuff of Middle Eastern bartanng.

Karajouli has just finished playing three gigs with Justin Adams, a British guitarist who has worked with Jethro Tull, Sinead O'Connor and Robert Plant. So far, though, for Karajouli this trip has been a frustrating experience. An acoustic oud is no competition for an electric Les Paul guitar. In the oud factory — actually more of a modest office near Salah Ad-Din Square — bass, treble and midrange odds hang on the wall. Each instrument took Sukkar two weeks to build by hand. Karajouli tests out the instruments, including two electric models. "Now I'm ready," he says at last, defiantly selecting one.

His previous reluctance to buy an electric oud, and subsequent eagerness to have one after collaborating with Adams (who travelled here under the wing of the British Council), reflect deep divisions within Syria's music scene, where semi-classical musicians vie against the overproduced digital beats of unadorned, syrupy pop — a relatively new development since the technology was first imported into the Middle East in the late 80s. Shamew, or Syrian song, is at a crossroads. Rigorously trained classical Arabic musicians — many in Karajouli's five-piece ensemble have been taught by Russian classical theorists at Damascus's Higher Institute of Music — must choose: do they want to keep to what they know, or modernise their methods and accommodate changing musical tastes and economic imperatives?

On their way to Aleppo, Karajouli and his ensemble complained about the worst excesses of Arabic pop, which takes recognisably beautiful and delicate melodies and trashes them in unsuitable arrangements.

By the end of the conversation, there was literally a chorus of "I hate, I hate, I hate". They have difficulty understanding that new music technologists are bred of Arabic songs' typical themes like unrequited love, and demand a banging dance groove instead. Curiously, these attitudes don't follow generational lines. At Karajouli's concerts with Justin Adams, polite middle-aged women in headscarves, as well as students, were receptive to downtown "it's dirty" Massaraq Dofla blues.

In Syria there are few places to play live music: it is not allowed to be performed in pubs and clubs; they have satellite feeds instead. The situation not only hinders pop singers. Last year, Karajouli, who also conducts The Youth Central National Orchestra, was forced to make a public complaint against Syria's arts authorities. "I've never seen myself as someone who'd criticise a minister on the TV," he admits, "but I had to ask why there was no place for the symphony to play."

While things are slow to change on the ground, they are moving faster on the airwaves. Because it was so unusual, BBC News reported that, in January, a flyer had been sent around the country's capital, advertising a pirate radio station called Damascus First. Recently, Syrian government ministers approved the existence of private radio stations devoted solely to music with no news or political content — a first in a country that had been tightly restricted under the 30-year reign of former president Hafez al-Assad. Since his British-educated son Bashar took over in 2000, BBC Radio One Lebanon has started broadcasting essentially Western pop chart programming across Syria.

The country's dearth of live venues makes officially sponsored functions all the more important. At a dressy soiree for the Professional Union of Journalists, reporters rose and shook hands with the Arab Ba'ath socialist party official in charge of media. Hints of the former Soviet dominance over the country's 'socialist popular democracy' are still apparent today. However, when the Abou Khalil Al-Khabbani ensemble — an eight-piece group including three violins — began playing and the noisy whistles started serving not wine but tea, a stern Karajouli stepped forward and admonished the audience to keep quiet.

Abou Khalil Al-Khabbani's vocalist, Sylvie Sulamane,

sang the 40-minute "Al Atial" ("The Turns"), an impassioned paean to the view over a city. The song was originally recorded by Om Kalsoum, the great Egyptian chanteuse who retains a pervasive hold over Arabic music some 27 years after her death. When she was young, Kalsoum dressed as a boy so she could sing religious verses with her father in the local mosque. As in Kalsoum's time, Sulamane later explains, the main problem facing Arabic women singers hinges on reputation. Due to issues of honour and propriety, her family won't let her sing on pop records or in hotels, in Syria, a decidedly less fundamentalist country than other Middle Eastern nations, the classical tradition — both Eastern and Western — has certain 'respectable' connotations. The popular female singer Assia Nash had recorded an as yet unreleased duet with Pavarotti.

However, it is Kalsoum against which singers across the Arab world are still measured. Aleppo's Sabah Fakhri has been called her male counterpart. As a leading exponent of *muwashshah* (decorated) sung poetry from Andalusia, he holds the record for the longest concert in Syria — 14 hours. It takes him two hours to warm up. In Arabic music, time stands still and poetry from the 15th century is still relevant today. Rhythm is also a constant. Fakhri's percussionist Jamal Al-Sakka holds his tambourine in both hands up in front of his face and plays it as if it's an orchestra. Like all Syrian musicians, he finds work wherever he can.

Even the best classically trained musicians think nothing of performing in restaurants. Inad Eddine Melki, who plays the 100-string *qanun* or Arabic zither, performs with The Syrian National Orchestra, among many other groups. He will spend the whole day in rehearsals and in the evening go to the Umayyad Palace Restaurant in the shadow of Damascus's best-known mosque. It's not a tourist job, since few visitors come in March, even less since 11 September. As Melki accompanies a singer with an oud, a lone Dervish whirrs, his skirt spinning aerodynamically in time with the music. In an ancient and walled city, considered the longest inhabited in the world, the past is suddenly as vivid as the future. □



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-S-T-R-U-N-G-
Thurston Moore
Toshi Makihara
Wally Shoup

New Releases on Sutlingual

SR072

Carler/Cook/Kowald/LaMaster Principle Hope

Fiercely energetic compositions alongside passages of introspective beauty when New York's main of the hour **Daniel Carler** (peds, trumpet, flute), percussionist **Laurence Cook** (drums and electronic percussion), European free bassist **Peter Kowald**, and violinist **Jonathan LaMaster** meet up for a studio recording session and a concert at the Trenchard Theatre in Boston. The disc features computer "enhanced" files, including a concert video of the group joined by **Keith Fullerton Whitman** (real-time audio processing), created by **Pixorix Labs**.



SR011

-S-T-R-U-N-G-

A production of string adventurer **Jon Rosa** with **Steve Heather**, **Car Fuhler**, and others in a collective of mostly immigrant musicians who, for better or worse, find themselves living in Amsterdam. They are either performers on a variety of string instruments or have an interest in the innumerable sonic possibilities of the bowed, plucked, scraped, hit, or otherwise "excited" string.



"A substantive recording that is both highly verbose and extremely fun to listen to." —*Walter Hore, Signal to Noise*

New on Sutlingual Rare Editions/Unit Circle Reissues

994 Jupiter 88 Red Go

Michael McDonald, who sadly passed away at a young age in April of 2000, was the mastermind of Boston based **Jupiter 88**. Michael (with vocalist **Daria Vailani**) recorded several releases for Unit Circle (home of Amy Denio, Ironhorse, and Bill Herold) drawing inspiration from tropicallibert beats, composers such as **Bessie, Reich and Cage**, magnetic tape pioneers of the 50's and 60's (**Bono and Mimmaroli**), jazz, and others from DJ Shadow to the **Rachels**. **Red Go** is Michael's final masterpiece. It contains vocal work from **Vallani** and amazing newcomer **Rosa Pulman**, guests **Saturnalia String** and many others.



"Brilliant, balmy... an audacious example of post-Mark E. Smith pop minimalism."

—*David Lewis, Exclaim*



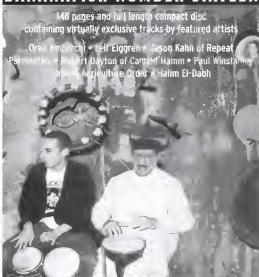
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EI-P

Tested by Peter Shapiro. Photos by Mattias Ek

New Yorker Jamie Meline met Leonard Smythe, who was DJing at his 18th birthday party, in 1993. Adopting the aliases El-P (Meline) and Mr Len (Smythe), the two released a single, "Juvenile Techniques", later that year under the name Company Flow. Recruiting rapper Bigg Jus, the new trio released the *Funcrusher EP* in 1995 on their newly formed label, Official Recordings. This, along with their now legendary appearances on the Stretch Armstrong radio show on New York's WKCR, cemented the group's reputation as one of the leading lights of the new HipHop underground. Their brutally uncompromising sound and philosophy ("Independent as fuck") was perfected on the follow-up single, "Eight Steps To Perfection"/"Vital Nerve", which found El-P bragging that he was "the third gunner on the grassy knoll" on top of aggressively minimal production. After another excellent 12", 1997's "Info Kill", the group signed to indie titans Rawkus and released the landmark *Funcrusher Plus* album in 1997. In addition to some of the most creative and inspirational battle rhymes ever recorded ("My shit is like War And Peace, yours is just the Cliff Notes"), the album highlighted El-P's barbarous funk production.

After another fierce EP, 1998's *End To End Burners*, and an instrumental album, 1999's *Little Johnny From The Hospital*, Company Flow broke up, with Mr Len signing to Matador and Bigg Jus starting his own Subverse label. In between collaborations with Qannum and Deltron 3030, and producing a few tracks for former Rage Against The Machine singer Zack De La Rocha's forthcoming solo album, El-P went on to found his own Def Jux label, which has released startling albums from Cannibal Ox and Aesop Rock, as well as a retrospective of the folded Fonda "Em label which largely created the aesthetic of underground HipHop. El-P's debut solo album, *Fantastic Damage*, is released in May on Def Jux. The Jukebox took place in El-P's hotel room in London.

TREACHEROUS THREE "THE BODY ROCK"

FROM SUPERDOLBY DIGITAL RAP VOL 2
(SILVER INTERACTIONS) 1980

This jam is actually something that I didn't latch on to until afterwards. This was a little too old for me. My introduction to this shit was more like [Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five's] "White Lines" and early [Treacherous Three member] Kool Moe Dee tapes, and kids who had tapes of Moe Dee battling Busy Bee, so this is something that I had to retrospectively discover because I was around ten when I started to really get into HipHop. This kid had to school me because I was trying to play him The Fat Boys [laughs]... I am a bit of a new jack - I was born in 1975, and it wasn't until 1985 that I started to listen to HipHop.

In "Squeezee Man Shooting" on *Fantastic Damage*, you talk about listening to Kool Moe Dee to get the cadence. Why him?

That's just who I was hearing, like "Go See The Doctor". I was just using him as an example. It fit cadence wise, and rhetorically, it fit the rhyme. But that's what I used to do. It was a bedroom fantasy, you know, I was a bedroom rapper. I would just emulate these guys, but for me it was like, "I'm just gonna throw my name in there". That's what I was talking about in that song; being a kid, that period in your life where there's no sort of corruption in the way that you approach the music. I tried to capture a moment when it was only about loving the music and discovering it. That's how I started to become an MC, basically - just attempting to imitate and mimic the cats that I was hearing, strictly out of fun, strictly out of just saying it out loud. It was like an exercise you could do. I couldn't sing and I wasn't trying to, but I could talk. That's how it seemed when it started to come out - cats were talking.

Was all this in Brooklyn?

Until I was seven, I lived in the West Village with my mother, my father and my two sisters. When my mother and father got divorced we moved to downtown Brooklyn. We bounced around, spent five years there and then lived back in Manhattan again. My connection to Brooklyn is much stronger than my connection to Manhattan, because Manhattan is not really organic. You don't really feel a neighbourhood, just buildings. Brooklyn's much more of a neighbourhood-friendly type of environment. You meet kids down the block, your parents don't know that you know those kids. So that's where I really started to become a New Yorker. I've lived in New York all my life, I've never lived anywhere else.

BBC RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP "DR WHO THEME"

FROM BBC'S THE GREATEST HITS VOL 1 (TV) 1993

What the fuck is this? What is this?

It's the theme to the BBC sci-fi series *Dr Who*. Oh, of course. Definitely. *Dr Who*, that was the first British import. That was the only thing the British ever did right. No, I'm just kidding. It was *Dr Who* and Monty Python and then *Fawlty Towers*. Yeah, *Dr Who* was the shit. It was a little too much for me to wrap my head around at the time, you know? But it was fucking incredible. Was *Dr Who* a cable thing [in the US]?

I think it was on public TV, channel 13 in New York. Yeah, yeah, it was on channel 13, because I knew it wasn't on normal television, normal network television. I was obsessed with all those shows. I wasn't a nerd about it. I wasn't a Trekkie or anything. I didn't have a set of rubber Vulcan ears in my drawer. But *Dr Who* was new. It was hard for me to place, that theme. I knew I knew it, but it was hard to place.

What is it about science fiction that interests you?

Well, as a kid it's fantastic, just the magnificence and the mystery. You're much less interested in adult things as a kid, you know, walking, talking, sipping tea, people talking about issues [laughs]. We don't listen, it was the Charlie Brown voice for us. As I got older, it wasn't really the "science" part that interested me. As I got into writing, and reading certain authors like George Orwell, Ray Bradbury with the Robot series, then Philip K Dick and Harlan Ellison stuff, what appeals to me is not the alien civilisation stuff - I'm interested in the metaphor. I'm interested in the siphoning of reality through a ridiculous magnifying glass or kaleidoscope. I'm interested in how it reflects what we're seeing now. People like Philip K Dick didn't want to be classified as science fiction writers, but that was the industry they were in, so they had to write these dollar books, basically. They wrote these pulp books with huge ideas. People could classify 1984 as science fiction because it's about the future, but the only thing that was scientific about that was maybe the television that talked back to you. It's more like sociological fiction I think. The way that the metaphor can exaggerate already existing possibilities or situations is what always interests me.

A lot of people seem to think that I have a huge science fiction thing, but I don't think people really understand what science fiction is. I don't think people are educated in the sense that they know the definition. Fiction that takes things to the logical extreme, and fiction in general, is the only form of creativity that I think has truly epiphanous ground. I don't believe in non-fiction, because I don't like the idea that I have to read something under the assumption that it's true. It stifles me, it annoys me. I'd rather read something under the assumption that it's completely made up and then draw conclusions from it. Not to mention that I just like the idea of floating cars. What it all boils down to is, above all my pseudo-reflections, I just want a floating car. And I'm fucking pissed off we don't have any yet, as Mike Ladd so eloquently stated. Don't you feel like all the world's problems would just go if we had floating cars? I swear we should just get a bunch of floating cars over to the Middle East.

HOWARD JONES "NEW SONG"

FROM ELECTRA 71 1984

What is this? Men Without Hats or something? Oh my God, wait. [Laughs] It's not Men Without Hats... It's not Human League because I'd recognise that. It's not New Order, it's not Culture Club because they're very identifiable. What the fuck? Who is this? It's like one cat isn't it?

You're getting there.

It's not U2... I thought you weren't trying to stomp me, this is terrible. It's not Gary Numan? Nah, he was too experimental for this type of shit. Who is it?

Howard Jones.

Oh, Howard Jones, of course, God, what the fuck happened to him? That's like the last chapter of music. That's the era that you want to be ashamed of, but you can't really because that was the shit you were listening to as a kid. I wasn't buying Howard Jones records, but it was very prevalent on MTV and... That's my era, man. I mean, that's why I'm so interested in noise and in synths and in synth sounds and things like that. I don't really think that Howard Jones is a great example of the best of that type of music, but at its best, the 80s sound - it was the post-70s funk era, post-disco and all of a sudden everyone had synths, it was the new technology to fuck with, so a lot of the stuff had this weird combination of funk, analogue basslines and instruments and these really chirpy

Invisible Jukebox

synth noises that were used in really dope ways. For some reason, it just ended up working.

I can't front, I bought a lot of this shit when I was a kid, that's what was there: Wall Of Voodoo, Art Of Noise, stuff like that. What a weird era. He was huge too. All you needed back then to be British and have strange hair and a crappy keyboard.

EPMD "PLEASE LISTEN TO MY DEMO" FROM UNWISHED BUSINESS PRIORITY 1986

[Immediately] Shit, man, EPMD, "Please Listen To My Demo." This is one of the most classic HipHop songs in history to me. The interesting thing about it was, if you go back and analyse all their records and videos, how come E Double was always driving the worst car? I drove it to it and it's like, "I drove a Corvette, he drives a Samurai Suzuki." When the car breaks down on the bridge on the way to Manhattan to shop the demo, how come E had to get out and push while Parrish drives? You look at that relationship, then you study the history and see that P was taking the publishing and doing the label and shit, then it all started to fall apart. C'mon, I think Enk was getting jerked from the beginning. I love that song because EPMD could be hardcore over a sample like that. I forget where that sample is from... it's **Faze-O's "Riding High"**.

Right, right, right. They were the first guys to fuck with it, and it had a great sound. I love the classic HipHop intro that EPMD probably mastered. It's like, "Yo, yo what's up", and then they say their names like it's a regular conversation: "Yo, what's up E Double? Hi Parrish Smith." I mean, who the fuck says their last name in a conversation? That's some classic rap shit. When I did a record with Del (The Funky Homosapien) called "Offspring", it was like, "Let's do the classic rap intro." "Yo, what up Del? What's up E/P?" Instead of just being, "Yo, man what's up?" I don't have to identify you, I'm standing here in front of you. I think it's every rapper's job to do one song with an intro like that.

EPMD were really my biggest inspiration. I loved everyone, but I was just obsessed with EPMD because they had this funk and this swagness about them, the sick bass, repetitive shit. That's how I ended up starting: I just want to rock over that one bass note. They were using synth and modulated sounds in HipHop before a lot of cats were. You listen to their records and they had some sick shit that now people would call experimental, but back then it was just HipHop, the way it should be. I just like the way they played off of each other, and the way that basically they weren't saying shit, but they were just talking shit and had new wordplay. It's sort of like "taxi driver" of EPMD. You go back to them and they created so many phrases that became part of HipHop culture. They were even talking about "Wu kung fu." E Double said, "Equipped with something something, master Wu kung fu," and then Wu Tang came out and then I listened to that album again—because every year I go through a phase where I have to listen to all their albums—and I was like, "Oh shit, they said that".

HERBIE HANCOCK "AUTODRIVE" FROM FUTURE SHOCK (COLUMBIA) 1983

I kinda recognise it but I don't know what it is.

It's Herbie Hancock, "Autodrive" from Future Shock. I know "Rockit" from Future Shock, "Rockit" was the one for me, for everyone. Yeah, Hancock was sick. It was weird for me to become a producer and realise that Hancock had done shit before "Rockit" [laughs]. I didn't know, I was just a kid. He's an all cat. For me it was retroactive discovery, of course, but you realise he

did so much. It was kind of hit or miss. So for me, it was like, "Oh, he did the Death Wish soundtrack. That's sick. Maybe I'll get another Herbie Hancock record." And then you get some soft saxophone jazz shit. And you're like, "What the fuck is this?" I feel like producers like this are something that don't really exist anymore in music, producers who are so talented that they have their hands involved at some point in damn near every genre of music that's possible to do. In a sense it would be nice to be that type of producer. I don't think I am. I don't think I have the potential to be that type of producer. You're talking about cats who are classically trained musicians. I took piano lessons for ten years, and saxophone and trumpet, but I'm a HipHop producer. I could probably go somewhere else beyond that, but it's always going to be rooted in HipHop, whereas with producers like Hancock or Quincy Jones, it's not necessarily discernible where they're originally coming from. They're able to pretty much do anything, but it's still pretty much hit or miss.

Your father was a jazz pianist. Was that influential at all? He was playing lots of stuff to you?

Definitely. Music was presented to me as something you were involved in, something that was functional, something that was a human contact thing. And I feel lucky because there are a lot of people who don't get that. They're just fans. They just listen. So from a young age I was sitting on his lap playing piano with him, or he'd have these parties and he'd be shitfaced and he'd be like, "Hey, get on the drums!" He had a little drum set and he'd play piano and I'd bang on the drums and he'd try to make me sound OK. But my dad is an interesting cat because he would go around the city, the bars around the [Greenwich] Village as the 70s. He proceeded to do gigs throughout his whole life. He went out to Key West [Florida] and he was doing bar gigs. He never really had the aspiration to be a creative musician or to make records, as far as I know. I've asked him about it, but he seems reserved about expressing whether he had a creative bone in his body, but he does because you see him improvise. The more I learn about him, I realise the wider he was. He had a tap dance school, he was a dancer, it was all based around jazz, but eventually he lost half his foot in a motorcycle accident, so he couldn't do that anymore.

GOBLIN "SUSPIRIA" FROM SUSPIRIA (CINEVEX) 1987

This isn't on YouTube! Well is it?

No, but it's **Tubular Bells** in a similar way.

Oh, I see, good hint. What movie is this from?

Suspiria

What's that?

Really, I would have thought you were a **Dario Argento** man.

No man. Put me up on it, put me up.

He's an Italian slasher flick director...

Oh that cat, right, right. Nah, I was never really... I do know a lot of cats who are obsessed with him. Automator's into his shit a lot. The slasher genre was never really something that I was that in love with. I don't really like... death [laughs]. Even as a kid, I wasn't really into that shit. I was more into cerebral fright as opposed to the more concrete. "I'm going to kill you with this knife right!" [laughs]

Well, Argento was both, which is why people really... OK, he was the guy who did the stuff that became the paradigm for all the Jason [Friday The 13th] flicks. Like some guy chasing a girl through the forest walking really slowly, but no matter how slowly... Right, right, I got it.

One of the reasons I chose this because it was by an Italian Prog rock group called Goblin...

Oh yeah, word. I know about Goblin.

A lot of people call what you do 'progressive HipHop' and some of the tempos and the way you use sounds are somewhat similar to groups like King Crimson... Yeah, I'm a fan of King Crimson. I'm trying to do that and weave all the labels because if I had it my way suckers wouldn't find it necessary to do that, I'm so proud of HipHop music and I feel that there's so much that HipHop can do, and immediately when it starts to change from what you're used to, people start comparing it to other music and give credit to other music, and I think that that's bullshit. Rock has been a huge influence in HipHop. It wasn't until much later that soul became the foundation of HipHop. The James Brown samples, that wasn't until much later, until Super Lover Dee and Casanova Rud, that was PE. Now, people who listen to stuff that has rock elements in it think that that must be rock, not HipHop, or it must be Prog something. To me, it's like, "Listen to Run OMS's first album and then tell me if I'm taking influence from that or me using guitar samples is so strange!" Ultimately, the media will do what it has to do, and I understand the mechanism of having to place something in a category. It's functional, you're a writer, you want to get a gig, you've got to pitch a story, the story's got to have a title or a place that it fits, the people like to have a category to identify, the kids like to have a category to identify themselves stylistically. Ultimately, I think people have to give HipHop music more credit. There's so much potential and so much going on within our frame that you have to let us keep what we're doing for ourselves. This is not alternative, this is not Prog, or postrock or whatever the intellectuals want to call it, it's HipHop music and we claim it. That is ours. You want to talk progressiveness? What the fuck is taking two turntables and making music out of that? That's pretty progressive, or at least... strange.

ORGANIZED KUNFUSION "STRESS" FROM STRESS: THE EXTINCTION AGENDA (HOLLYWOOD BASIN) 1994

[Immediately] "Crush, kill, destroy. Stress." Extinction Agenda. Ridiculous album, ridiculous HipHop group. Classic. Completely before their time, complete innovators. This record destroyed, it was just hardcore. Organized Kunfusion, cats don't give them enough credit for what they did stylistically, for the influence they had and just the raw fucking emotion. Pharoahe's rhyme on this is ridiculous. And their album cover was done by the same guy who did our album cover.

Company Force is **Funckrusher Plus**, who actually did [NAME?]. I just wanted to give him a little hug, a little lyrical hug. The song is "Turned Mass Camper" and it's dedicated to him and another friend of mine, an upright bassist, an incredibly talented virtuoso, but incredibly fucked up and confused, drug addict, completely did not fit into the world. He was constantly on a binge of some sort. It hurts to see these people who have such vision, such beauty, not being able to handle the regular, everyday stresses and regular functionality that people who have no interest in creating anything are so adept at. It was also my recognition that I have the capacity to fall into that too.

Why do you think that there's not more of that admittance of weakness in HipHop because it seems such a direct vehicle for that kind of thing. Do you think it's just its roots...

Well, HipHop was on some bottle shit from the beginning, but there are a couple reasons I think. Look at cats who come up from ghetto environments and the only power that they have is self-certainty, and that comes through on record. It's a statement of survival



to an extent. It's a luxury to be able to admit that. I'm admitting that I have that luxury because I didn't grow up in a ghetto, I just grew up in an urban environment, New York City. I have the luxury to be able to reflect a little bit and show my weakness because I feel strong in my life. But when you're in an environment that you can't control at all, maybe you want control in other ways and one way to do that is to be in control in your imagination. That's what I tried to do with this record. I hadn't done that before. On the first record it was just us talking shit. It was just us trying to find the funnest and most clever ways of saying, "You suck" [laughs].

If anything, I can say that *Fantastic Damage* is brutally honest about myself. I'm letting people in on a lot of personal things. I just felt like I had to. There can't be too much pretence anymore — shit is too hectic right now. I don't know if I'll get the chance to make another album the way shit's going these days. If you're going to do something artistically right now, I think the best approach is pure honesty. There's also enough room left for you to talk shit, hold your dick and say you're the best. That's important, that's the foundation of my style, but I'm also interested in going further. I don't think people want to hear me just talk about HipHop. I'm a grown man at this point.

FALSE PROPHETS "SCORCHED EARTH"

FROM NEW YORK THROUGH ROIR 1989

[Song begins with a rap by the 'Honky Four Plus None'] This ain't some weird Cold Crush thing is it? [Punk guitars come in] Huh, guess it's not Cold Crush [laughs]. It's not Suicidal Tendencies is it?

No, it's a pretty obscure New York hardcore group called False Prophets.

It's funny that I thought it was Cold Crush at first, because that's the only group that I remember where five people would do the whole rhyme. The New York hardcore scene was something that was happening parallel to the HipHop scene. I had friends that were involved in it, but I was never involved in it. I meet a lot of kids these days who are like, "Remember this group and that group?" And I'm like, "No." And they're like, "Stop lying, you grew up in New York in the 80s and you're white, come on." I'm like, "No, I swear, I was just listening to Run DMC at that time."

Again, a lot of people call what you do punk. Where did that attitude come from?

HipHop. It came from Run DMC, honestly. The Fat Boys, they weren't really like that, they were just kind of fat and funny, dope though. But Run DMC were like [adopts classic B-boy arms crossed pose]. "Uhhh, fuck you, we're the shit." They weren't really saying it though. It was just their element, their vibe that was hardcore, it was just confident, and that's where it evolved from for me. I guess there are just parallel lines. I guess motherfuckers just come to similar conclusions in their attitudes and the way they express themselves because they're growing up in similar times, but it's just siphoned through different influences. People think I'm on some punk rock shit, but I guess I was just never your jazzy, mellow guy [laughs].

The other reason I picked that was the rap-rock thing. How did you hook up with Zack De La Rocha?

Because Zack is straight up B-boy, he knows more about HipHop than most costs. He knew Company Flow and he liked our records, but when "Patriotism" came out on *Soundbombing 2* that clicked with him. He approached me and we met up and talked about his solo album. We were talking about stuff that we were interested in, punk, Gang Of Four's *Entertainment*, that album is pretty sick and we talked about that. He said that he thought I was bringing a Bomb Squad sound, and that's what he was into. I wasn't gonna do it if he wanted to do *Rage Against the Machine* because I can't do that. I'm not that rock oriented. Zack's one of the few people out there who has substantial knowledge about politics and music. It seems like there's no one out there who wants to investigate or drop any science. I'm a different type of cat, I'll talk about politics, but it's on an observational level, more connected to confusion as opposed to statements. I really don't have any answers. I think that Zack is one of the rare people that does. I admire the cat because he's such an activist.

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

"THE DESERT IS A CIRCLE"

FROM THE MUSIC OF EL TOPO (SOUNDGIRL 1990)

I know this. It's not Booker T, it's not The Meters. I have this record.

Don't think music.

It's clearly not Isaac Hayes or anything like that.

Think Mexican film.

It's not Almodovar.

It's Jodorowsky. El Topo.

That's what I meant when I said Almodovar. For what it's worth I was thinking El Topo because I've got that record. He's sick, did you ever see *Holy Mountain*?

Yeah, that's why I played this...

Yeah, obviously, I sampled that on *Funcrusher Plus*. That's a move that you can't watch too many times. There's only so many times you can see Christ taking a crap or a mountain of bloody toads battling each other [laughs]. That's a sick movie. I didn't like El Topo as much. But *Holy Mountain*, I loved the whole diabre that I sampled, just the breakdown and the whole symbolism of the government structure, it really broke down the way governments and totalitarian governments work, money, war, housing. It was straight out of 1984 essentially, but I found it to be really powerful.

It reminds me a bit of "Steppfather Factory" from Fantastic Damage.

That wasn't conscious. There are few things I played with in "Steppfather Factory", one of which is the obvious metaphor to talk about an experience in my childhood, and the other was the chorus, "The latest in technology, the age of familial industry". Thinking in terms like, "This is something that motherfuckers will do", or would do because they know it's just supply and demand. I was just thinking of the whole work force. I had a bunch of images, one of which was the World's Fair, like when they had robots in the 30s [adopts mock 50s TV announcer voice]. "Robots! They're going to clean your house". The whole pitch to the family, like how they pitched the vacuum cleaner. So the first verse being the pitch, and the second verse being the fine print and the instruction manual. "Oh, by the way, your robot is crazy. Your robot is just as crazy as the human you could've gotten". In a dark way that's my sense of humour. I liked the idea that if you bought a robotic steppfather he would still get drunk and beat your ass. Then I thought about industry and how motherfuckers would probably, if they could, manipulate that into an industry simply for the sake of making money. □

"Photos of a band don't really make sense to me," declares Loran Chasse of the Jewelled Antler collective of California avant-rock and improvisation ensembles, after resigning himself to a photo shoot in his Mission district apartment in San Francisco. "Neither do descriptions of how things were recorded and the gear that was used. All it does is take away from somebody's imagination." Indeed, a certain degree of fancifulness is crucial to appreciating the aesthetic of the Jewelled Antler collective with its revolving membership across various projects such as Thupa, The Kirt Separates, The Blithe Sons, The Skygreen Leopards, The Birdtree and The Child Readers. The convoluted paths for each of these projects are all marked by the unwavering quest for adventure and spontaneity, not simply with art but with the world at large. As Chasse says of their working methods, "We wanted to make recording an enjoyable activity, make it like a picnic."

The Jewelled Antler collective originated as part of the expanding activities of the improvisational ensemble Thupa which is comprised of Chasse, Glenn Donaldson, Rob Reger and Steven R. Smith. On the surface, Thupa operates within the aesthetic realms of psychedelic improvisation carved out by Japan's Taj Mahal Travellers with their 70s alchemical mantras, or Jackie-O Motherfucker with their nomadic proclivities. But Chasse is quick to counter, "It's funny that we get likened to all these bands, but AMM is the band that we most think about. Not that we necessarily sound like them. As far as the principle of making music is concerned, we're most aligned with AMM than with the Taj Mahal Travellers, with these extended jam things. I don't really identify with that kind of music making. We may sound like that in the end, but I think it's more like this AMM practice. It's totally about being in the moment. That's what's so compelling about it: there are four people in a room who are really listening to each other. There are so many of these bands who improvise which is just noise, and I can't really believe that they are really listening, everyone is playing in this vacuum or this void, just bashing."

Along with the concentration of pure listening, Thupa attempt to push their music completely into a realm of fantasy, inspiring the listeners to use their imagination to fill in the visual, textural and olfactory blanks that Thupa conjure with their incantations of sound. While guitars, piano, drums and organ are instrumental within the process, they take great care to surround themselves with cluttered branches, piles of rocks, succulent plants, numerous candles, rusted motorcycle rims and other elements from their surroundings both natural and urban. Keeping true to the group's name, which is the genius of a North American cedar, Donaldson explains, "An analogy that we instantly saw in it was that Thupa sounded like some weird naturally occurring thing. It's so organic that it feels like how a forest might feel, with stuff falling or animals rustling." "It's obviously a fiction," Chasse continues. "We're not denying that we use guitars and drums, but it's a poetic thing, emulating organic processes. It represents the atmosphere captured in Rob's warehouse. We'd play there on late

Sunday afternoons, just drinking tea and there was this murky light and all these plants."

Although live performances have been few and far between for Thupa, they recently played as a trio (Steven R. Smith currently resides in Los Angeles) as a part of Greg Weeks's Traveling Plague revue in the shabby confines of San Francisco's Edinburgh Castle. Unconcerned with the squalor din of those parked downstair at the bar, Thupa enjoyed their own private ritual of quiet dronescapes, as Chasse ground and tapped hand-sized rocks through primitive electronics to arrive at a bristling mass of textural washes, while Reger amiably spun a skateboard wheel hooked up to an amplifier and sporadically shook jarring bursts from his guitar. The most beguiling part of their condensed set occurred when Donaldson stopped blowing his ood and began slashing his bow across the mass of dried branches that sat in the middle of the stage. "There's the meditative quality of trying to not have a musician's ego and a non-playing," Donaldson says. "You erase yourself and when you hear it back, you're not sure what your contribution is, but definitely feel a part of it. There's no meaning to it necessarily, but it's getting into an intuitive state that is totally rewarding." "I feel like I did some weird yoga," Chasse adds.

Thupa began as a logical extension of the heavy, space-rock mantras conjured by Mirza, Donaldson and Smith's previous outfit. Mirza's dissolution in 1999 was a culmination of two of Mirza's members moving away from San Francisco, a desire to pursue new ideas towards quieter, acoustic based music, and the physicality of the "MC5/Stooges Detroit train wreck style" that was taking a toll on then percussionist Smith, who had wanted to return to his favoured instrument, the guitar. Donaldson and Smith had asked their old college friend Reger to join them in an improv group. As for Chasse's introduction to the group, Donaldson recounts, "I had seen Loran play before in Ohm-A Revolver and was blown away, because he was playing completely non-rock drumming in this sort of rockish band. He had contact mics on his drums and he was scraping the cymbals. I thought, 'That's what I want a drummer to do!' I was imagining there being drums, but sometimes you have a drummer and he just wants to play beats. So you have to rock out so the drummer doesn't get bored." Fortunately for Donaldson's then unrealised project, Chasse's attitude synchronised perfectly. "That's the shit that bored me about playing drums, playing beats."

Culled from hours and hours of mindscapes and four-track recordings, Thupa's recording sessions have produced only two releases. The *Dear Lay Down Its Bones* (JUMULU) and *Ghost Plants* (Emperor Jones), though they have sculpted a handful of unreleased albums from the backlog of material. The *Dear Lay Down Its Bones* (1999) slowly rotates through Reger's warehouse space, at times closely investigating various scrapings, grey noises and finely plucked notes, then pulling back to capture the whole sound of the group with the loose meanderings through a pleasantly pointillist piano, mellow high loneliness



FROM A GRAFTING OF MICROSONICS' ENVIRONMENTAL HUM, GROUP-MIND IMPROV AND MID-80S HARDCORE, CALIFORNIA'S

Jewelled Antler Collective

INCLUDING LOREN CHASSE, MIRZA, THUJA, THE KNIT SEPARATES AND MORE, REINVENT THEMSELVES ALMOST EVERY TIME THEY CONVE
TO PLAY JIM HAYNES MEETS THE GROUP THAT WOULD RATHER RELEASE ORGANIC MATTER THAN COG

Photos: Dianne Jones

Trees have ears



"THUJA SOUND LIKE SOME WEIRD NATURALLY OCCURRING THING LIKE A FOREST MIGHT FEEL, WITH STUFF FALLING OR ANIMALS RUSTLING"

In the photo: Thugs (left to right) Rob Rager, Loren Chasse, Glenn Donalson, Brandon Quinn and Jason Honea

guitar duets and modulating intervals from a organ drones rippling with tremolo. The album is so thick with an opiated haze and fleeting impressions of psychedelia, free jazz and industrial droniness straggled in a live version of 40's classic ethericism, it's hard to believe that the group were just drinking tea during those sessions. Ghost Plants (Emperor Jones 2002) finds Thugs also trying to make the sound of their record much less recognisable, but strangely more melodic, by withdrawing much of the piano which had been so present on their debut, instead building amorphous tunes from delicate clatters and environmental hum.

Outside of Thugs, both Loren Chasse and Steven R Smith have developed impressive bodies of solo work, although on different paths. Occasionally working with Brandon LaBelle as dJ battery, and also with this avatar as Colectivo, Chasse situates his work in parallel to the lower case and "microsound" factions of minimalism, yet he purposefully avoids the digital sheen so often found within those regions. Consciously considering the metaphor of his array of primitive microphones as ears, and thus as extra, sensory appendages to his body, Chasse recontextualises field recordings and contact mic amplifications of tiny events to examine the poetic properties of environmental (both manmade and natural) phenomena filtered through the body. Chasse's forthcoming release on Anomalous, *Hedges Of Nerves*, is his best work yet, with a keen sense of textural subtlety and a subtle application of lilting melodies. Similar in intent to Francisco López's *Unlited 92* (based on vinyl run-out grooves) and Reynolds' post-Plains classic *Blank Tapes*, *Hedges Of Nerves* bristles through tidal fluctuations of vinyl surface noise accompanied by recordings of campfires, shortwave static, surf and textural rubbings of fabric. Chasse counters these washes of details with slow moving collage melodies that emerge from the quiet noise as distant foghorns.

While talking with Donalson and Chasse, they ask if I have heard their colleague Steven R Smith's work, and I respond with the offhand remark that it sounds like Bixa Borged covering Swell Maos instrumentals. Both of them laugh at the statement, as I appear to have stumbled across two of Smith's biggest influences. Smith concurs from his home in Los Angeles, "I'm glad you picked up on the Bixa borged thing and those Swell Maos instrumental pieces. No one really mentions those in reviews, and to me it's so obvious that those are reference points that I keep returning to." When discussing Einstürzende Neubauten, little attention is given to the guitar bravado that Borged provides, with his gritty, unkempt scribbles as personified flounders within Neubauten's orchestrations of collapse. Smith has refined those Borged guitars into revelatory scores of bitersweet leitmotifs and sublime crescendoes that majestically wax and wane through his albums, in particular *Lineaments* (Emperor Jones 2002), which effortlessly waltzes through a cinematic version of psychedelia.

For the Jewelled Antler collective, those notions of non-linear trajectories and spontaneous revelations are not confined to improvisation, as their other manifestations display an idiosyncratic pop sensibility. The flagship ensemble for these pop adventures is The Kint Separates, a project fronted by the boyishly charming Jason Honea. Speaking with a jovially quick banter, Honea articulates The Kint Separates' confluence of spontaneity and pop: "There's a reliance and resignation about the improv element that dictates that the music is just going to go where it wants to go. Where I get to have my steak and potatoes is that The Kint Separates sound like what a kids' band might sound like. I've always loved that schtick, that's why I've always loved The Birthday Party in how they draw from this boyhood imagery and those semantics and semaphores that are so initially strong to you."

The Kint Separates began when Honea was fronting the legendary West Coast hardcore group Social Unrest in the mid-80s, merely as an idea to start an "a cappella improv troupe." After coming to vibrant folk and brief encounters with improvisation in a post-punk context with ex-UK Sub Neko Garrett in 10 Bright Spikes, Honea moved onto a more complete, albeit tangential, realisation of that original idea through The Kint Separates with the help of Donalson, Smith and Mark Williams, all members of Mrza at the time, and more recently Chasse. With a primitive Phil Spector beat, a crisp guitar jangle, and an infatuation with 50s cruise music, Honea's voice soars with all the emotional strain and melodramatic inclination found in Stephen Merritt's songs for The Magnetic Fields, though The Kint Separates shine through extra layers of dirt, old military histories, bruises and sloppy kisses with more than few strains of antisocial punk behaviour.

However absurd and juvenile The Kint Separates appear, Honea is incredibly sincere about his project. "I take the songs really seriously," he attests, "It's fun making them and I'm very proud of them. I guess I don't really understand why people have aversions to them, as they sound like blatant emotional statements like any other kind of song could have. But then people have to point out to me that they're as long as an eighth grader's attention span, and some people can't get past the tones and the recording and the voice is way over the top. When I take those points individually, I realise that how I got to accepting them was very serious, with lots of trial and error. The music isn't a random attempt to be absurd and silly. You've got to have the brains and the wit to evolve as a person and a personality where you are smart enough to represent that to people. Most people are completely happy making a record that references all of the records in their collection, but to have the savvy and ability to create songs which are horrific and humorous with all kind of images going by, it takes a really intelligent band."

While Thugs and The Kint Separates are concrete projects with their own aesthetic and conceptual agendas, Jewelled Antler acts most like a collective with the much lesser known projects The Skygreen

Leopards, The Birdtree, The Bitter Sons and The Child Readers, which began mostly out of the cross-pollination of those personalities and the decision to build upon ideas, rather than force them awkwardly into a pre-existing group. For Donalson, each of these groups "are like little novels or short stories, where you populate it with songs and instrumental ideas and configurations of people. I just get really excited about a band name in my head. I just imagine the whole band and what it might sound like, and how I might accomplish something that would have this certain feel to it. Like The Birdtree, I just did it because I had these collages and there needed to be a band that goes with these collages." The work of The Birdtree is solely attributed to Donalson, yet he chooses not to call it a solo album, rather a group that just finds one member.

The Birdtree's only recording, *Carscans And Orchids*, is a primitive, British folk infused psychedelic album recalling the song based work of Scottish organicist Richard Young. The album's delicacy and emotional tenor is most pronounced on the fuzzy organic tune "Everyone Of Us A New Leaf", which finds Donalson's reverb soaked voice straining for a saddened melody just above his range. It's one of the most beautiful songs that few will get the chance to hear, as Carscans And Orchids is one of many made to order CD-R pressings released through the tiny Jewelled Antler publishing house, complete with Donalson's collages of bird-headed naysay picking flowers and dayglo magic marker radial spokes on the CD labels. For Donalson, "There is something special about us doing it. With each one I make, I want someone to hear it; whereas you get that box from the manufacturer or the label and you don't give a shit as to where they go, as long as you get the copies for your friends."

The Skygreen Leopards, which finds Donalson working with Donovan Quinn, also take the route of psychedelic revisionism, but stroll like carefree minstrels through their wistful impressions of the 60s, rather than with The Kint Separates' mythological bombast, jangling guitars, affected breathy vocal duets, and colorful solos ring throughout the Skygreen Leopards' mini-album *She Rode The Pink Gazelle And Other Stories*, with plenty of references to Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd and T. Rex. Quinn, with his rural American drawl and unsophisticated mannerisms, initially appears as an unlikely member of the Jewelled Antler bunch. Yet he has proved to be a formidable pop improviser during their sessions, which came about after Quinn responded to an online posting from Donalson looking for recommended musicians interested in The Fall and Gunits Column. Donalson openly marvels at Quinn's instantaneous creative process, with his reams of poems, books and songs that he has squirreled away in his trailer parked on a ranch in Walnut Creek, a distant suburb in the northern part of the San Francisco Bay Area. Quinn is mutually appreciative of the Jewelled Antler experience. "I've played with different people, and to tell you the truth I usually hate it," he states, "I love music, but I don't generally like playing with musicians, because that can turn it into work, when I don't see it that way. Glenn

and Loren are really good at making it a thing where you're involved in making good music and it's not schoolwork. I really can't stand working with musicians who would want to make out all of these charts and having to memorise these charts. I would always stray from it anyway."

Quinn's notion of music as play and not work is also found in The Blithe Sons and The Child Readers, two projects which take their cue from Chasse's comparison of recording to a picnic. For The Blithe Sons' second recording, *Waves Of Grass* (2001), Chasse and Donaldson hauled a portable Casio SK-1, a couple of little nine volt amps, melodica, a guitar and some bells deep into the confines of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, to make a quiet recording outdoors, with the wind coarsing through branches and squawking seagulls audible amidst The Blithe Sons' pastoral dronings. Paring Chasse with Honea, The Child Readers push these outdoor recordings even further, as Chasse explains, "Child Readers is from recordings that Jason and I made while driving around, taking hikes or camping. We always have a recorder and something happens. Jason would be strumming around a campfire and I would be playing a harp, and that would be one weekend. The next weekend, I would have that cassette and we would be driving around listening to the cassette, and Jason would start singing over the cassette in the car. I'd have the mic and a minidisc player to record. That was our studio, that's our overdubbing. Most of it is him singing or playing a guitar line in the passenger seat of the car with the tape amplifying, and that's the mix. I'd be driving with my little Walkman earphones on, trying to get the mic in place where the music is balanced in a cool way with his voice, but it has this shifting retarded quality towards it." With all of the abstracted buzzings and environmental din working their way alongside Honea's voice and folksy strum, The Child Readers end up sounding like an improbable hybrid of Jandek and Francisco López.

The future for Jewelled Antler looks forward to even more grandiose adventures into spontaneous sound construction and unconventional songwriting, alongside more baroque visual displays. Honea postulated about bringing The Knit Separates into the realm of film making, and Chasse sees Thupa becoming a sonic wunderkammer: "We keep toying with the idea of a Thupa Museum. We want to do a show with our friends' art and found objects and tables with cabinets of curios, paintings, shells, branches, and rusted objects, just recreating this weird gallery and the band playing these objects."

"I keep joking about releasing a piece of log with lichen on," Chasse concludes. "I want it to be a Thupa album. It's almost Buddhist, when you achieve the ultimate music, it's not even sound any more. It changes medium. It's transcending the body and the body in this case is music and that's the reference. So for it to transcend itself, it has to be becoming something else." Thupa's Ghost Plants is out now on Emperor Jones. Jewelled Antler info and mail order: www.Sacredfloor.com/jewelled-antler.htm



75 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, IN A BASEMENT ARTS SPACE IN CENTRAL MANCHESTER IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE THAT INCLUDED THE BUZZCOCKS AND COMPOSER TREVOR WISHART,

The Fall

STEPPED ONTO A STAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME. SIMON FORD DOCUMENTS THE EARLIEST MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF ONE OF THE MOST UNCOMPROMISING GROUPS OF THE AGE, AND TALKS TO ORIGINAL MEMBERS MARTIN BRAMAH, TONY FRIEL AND UNA BAINES

By Simon Ford





Everything has to start somewhere, even a group that seems to have been around forever. This month marks the 25th anniversary of The Fall's first live performance. Fittingly for a group that soon became a byword for credibility among members of the musical underground, the performance took place in a basement space in central Manchester. It was the primal scene that set The Fall on the road to creating a body of work which has been described by Michael Bracewell, in his 1997 book *England Is Mine*, as being "as important to the history of English pop as cabism was to the development of European painting" – quite an achievement for a bunch of disenfranchised, Northern working class youths.

But who were these people and how did they meet? The oldest member of the group, Mark Edward Smith, was born on 5 March 1957 in a quiet, leafy avenue in Prestwich, about five miles north of Manchester city centre. The name of the area derived from the Old English words 'preost' and 'we', meaning 'priest's retreat' or 'the dwelling of a priest' – a fitting law for the future Hip Priest of legend. Smith was a smart kid: he passed his 11-plus exam and went to Stand Grammar School in nearby Whitefield. Among previous 'Old Standens' was Lord Clive of Plassey (1725-74), famous for his role in the expansion of the British Empire into India.

From an early age Smith was healthily immune to the blandishments of pop music, preferring instead anything that sounded strange or different: Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid', The Groundhogs, Van Der Graaf Generator. He left school in the summer of 1973 and enrolled as an A-level student at St John's College. One of his fellow students at the College was Una Baines. The two had already met during the summer at a fair in Heston Park. "When I met Mark I was still wearing my black satin Marc Bolan jacket and was into Bowie and stuff like that," Baines recalls. "But it was like I was outgrowing that sort of stuff; the glam scene had become just too commercial. Mark introduced me to The Velvet Underground."

Baines was a month younger than Smith. They both found studying at St John's College financially difficult and soon left. After a stint working as an office clerk, Baines began training as a psychiatric nurse. She left home and rented a flat with an attic on Kingswood Road, just round the corner from Prestwich Hospital. Smith, meanwhile, was working as a clerk in an import-export business on Manchester Docks. It provided a steady income at a time when unemployment in Manchester and the rest of the country was growing. His desk job also provided cover for his writing, and he took full advantage of his breaks to use the office typewriters, typing out short stories and poems, fragments of which he would later transmute into lyrics, inspired by the 'weird' tales of HP Lovecraft and the strung-out science fiction of Philip K Dick.

One day in the mid-70s (no one remembers when exactly), Smith and Baines were relaxing on the couch at Smith's parents' house, listening to The Velvet

"EVERY WEEKEND WE WERE GETTING OUT OF OUR FACES BUT WE DIDN'T SEE IT AS A NIHILISTIC THING BECAUSE TO US IT WAS A QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE, WE WERE HUNGRY TO SEE DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING"

Previous page: Mark E. Smith, Martin Bramah and Tony Friel, The Electric Circus, Manchester, October 1977

Below: Bramah (on floor), Karl Burns, Smith, Friel and Una Baines inside the Kingswood Road flat (left) and outside Frenchwich Hospital, Manchester, mid-1977

Underground and The Doors, when Smith's sister, Barbara, came home with two new friends, Martin Bramah and Tony Friel. "Mark and I shared an interest in music," Friel recalls, "and would spend many evenings listening to records. Mark had an interesting collection, lots of bands I never listened to before, like Can, and 60s US punk bands."

Bramah and Friel had met at Heyes Boys Secondary School. Bramah remembers Friel as "a very eccentric boy. He got picked on a lot, but he had this wild imagination. I was drawn to him because he was full of mad ideas and tall tales". Bramah left school with just one O-level, in art. "We were really just factory fodder," he says. "It was a boys' school, very military in attitude, so we just tried to avoid it as much as we could. We would wander into town and do shoplifting. To be honest, most of the instruments we used to start The Fall were stolen." Like Smith and Baines he lasted just three months in further education. His teacher at Radcliffe Further Education College described trying to teach him as like "praising against the wind". Friel left school without any qualifications but was determined to make his way as a musician. "I always had an interest in art and music," he says. "The first record I bought was The Rolling Stones' 'Get Off Of My Cloud'. At the age of 11 or 12, I really got into Marc Bolan, and he inspired me to play guitar."

Friel, Bramah, Smith and Baines would often meet at the Kingswood Road flat to take drugs (acid, speed, magic mushrooms), play music and talk about what

they wanted to do with their lives. "We were totally wrapped up in music," Bramah says. "It meant a lot to us. The bands we loved, we loved dearly, it was our escape from what the world was offering us. Every weekend we were getting out of our faces. But we didn't see it as a nihilistic thing because to us it was a quest for knowledge, we were hungry to see different ways of being. We were all writing poetry."

Soon after coming together this quartet of friends decided to form a group. At first Bramah was going to be the singer, with Smith on guitar, Friel on bass and Baines on drums. It soon became apparent, however, that Smith was never going to learn to play the guitar, and he swapped roles with Bramah. Baines was also unlikely to be able to afford a drum kit and instead she started saving up for a keyboard. Even then they might not have taken it any further had it not been for the visit to Manchester in June 1976 of The Sex Pistols. The four decided to go to the gig, at the Lesser Free Trade Hall, after reading a reference to The Stooges in Neil Spencer's legendary NME review of an early Pistols show. It turned out to be an empowering experience, reinforced a month later when The Pistols returned to Manchester and were supported by local groups Slaughter And The Dogs and The Buzzcocks. As Bramah explains, "The music scene was very different then. People didn't start bands in Manchester. The gigs were all at big venues and bands came from out of town and half of them were American. You didn't think you could really do it, until

the punk thing happened."

A new urgency was injected into the group, but there was still the important question of what they should call themselves. According to Bramah, Smith's nominations included Master Race And The Death Sense and, somewhat less inflammatory, The Shades. For a while they were The Outsiders, after the novel (*L'Étranger*) by Albert Camus. When they discovered another group were already using that name, Friel suggested The Fall, the title of another book by Camus (*La Chute*). At a draft stage entitled "A Puffin Of Our Time", La Chute told the story of Jean-Baptiste Clerence, a successful Parisian barnster who came to regard his bourgeois existence as a sham and exiled himself to Amsterdam where he became a self-styled 'judge penitent', prosecutor of both himself and those he met. It was a perfect name for the new group: simple, distinctive and evocative of the withering social and moral critiques that would come to define Smith's lyric writing.

At the beginning of 1977 there were few signs to indicate that Manchester would become a centre for innovation, the site of a new wave in music. The consequences of The Sex Pistols' appearances took some time to filter through to live venues and works on vinyl. The first hint of what was to come occurred on 29 January, when The Buzzcocks' *Spinal Scratch* EP was released on the group's own New Hormones label. The city's music scene continued to develop out of the



sight of the national music press, until *Melody Maker* ran a story, on 14 May, titled "New Wave Devolution. Manchester Waits For The World To Listen". The article focused on The Buzzcocks, The Drones and Slaughter And The Dogs, and included a succinct description of the local milieu by Toshi Ryan, who ran Rabid Records, the label which had issued Slaughter And The Dogs' first single: "The area is so neglected, so economically deprived and full of massive housing complexes, that the mood of the place was right and ready for a new movement in music with a markedly different criteria of success. What has developed is peculiar to Manchester and I can only hope that instead of going to London for future deals, the agents and record companies will come here."

An important component in this 'new movement in music' was the Manchester Musicians' Collective, which had been established at the beginning of the year by Dick Witts and Trevor Wishart. Wits was a musician who had come to Manchester to study percussion. With money he earned working for The Hallé Orchestra, he promoted concerts of contemporary classical music and became interested in the idea of musicians organising themselves into co-operatives and collectives. At the same time, Wishart was employed as a composer-in-residence by North West Arts, the regional branch of the Arts Council. It was Wishart's idea to set up a collective to share equipment and put on gigs. "We wanted to know how these kids made music when they were musically

illiterate," Wits explains. "This was fascinating because we were overburdened with knowledge about music; we were just playing other people's stuff, and here were these kids coming along playing something from nowhere."

North West Arts occupied an office, shop and basement cafe on King Street, one of the most exclusive streets in Manchester's city centre. Wits persuaded the organisation to let out the basement on Monday nights for the Collective to use. From The Fall, it was Friel who first made contact with Wits and the Collective. "It had quite an impact on me personally," Friel says. "I met lots of interesting people and it turned me on to 'New Music', which has been an interest ever since." Friel persuaded the other members of The Fall to attend the Collective's meetings, and eventually the group were offered the chance to play. There was one problem: The Fall didn't have a drummer. Through a local advertisement they found 'Dale', an insurance salesman and rabid Conservative whose one attempt at songwriting was entitled "Landslide Victory". He was far from perfect, but for the moment he had to do. Another problem was that Una Baines had nothing to play. The bank loan she had applied for in order to buy a keyboard was still being processed. So with no instrument, she had to stand in the audience.

No one involved can remember the exact date of the gig, but Wits recalls the venue as being "like a fashionable restaurant in the late 70s, with everything

white. It was done out like a small white cave. We just took the tables and chairs out, Mark and Martin, who were taller than the others, had to bend down because of the low ceiling. It wasn't really public; the audience was just a group of other musicians sitting around listening."

Part of that audience consisted of local heroes The Buzzcocks. "The first gig was recorded, so somebody might have a tape somewhere," says Bramah. "It was a small room and about half the audience was The Buzzcocks. Mark just let fly with such venom from day one. I remember he just sort of reached into the audience and virtually poked his finger up Howard Devoto's nose."

For Friel the gig was the opportunity he'd been waiting for: "As you'd expect it was a bit tough - just right! We were really pleased to have a chance to play outside the bedst. People were kind and it was very encouraging." What hit the small audience immediately was the intensity of the group, especially Smith, who, according to Wits, "howled the place down". Later, Baines told Wits: "I don't know what the fuck he was doing. I've never heard him do that before, it scared me!" Bramah was not so surprised: "It was just yelling up inside us all. That was the way we were living, that was the way we felt and that was the way Mark was, I mean, if you went out to a club with Mark he'd pick a fight with someone. But that was just Mark: irrational and erratic. He didn't practise it, he didn't plan it, he was just like that."



"MARK LET FLY WITH SUCH VENOM FROM DAY ONE I REMEMBER HE SORT OF REACHED INTO THE AUDIENCE AND VIRTUALLY POKED HIS FINGER UP HOWARD DEVOTO'S NOSE"

Below: The Fall play out in Manchester, August 1977. Individual portraits, left to right: Bramah, Frial, Baines, Smith

A belief in their own creativity dictated against The Fall playing any cover versions that night. Instead the set consisted of original material, including the anarcho-rants "Hey! Fascist!" and "Race Hatred" (complete with its "What yer gonna do about it?" chorus), the bitter humour of "Bingo Master's Breakout!", and the adrenalin rush of "Psycho Mafia". The set ended with an extended two-chord dirge titled "Repetition". The song was almost a manifesto for the new group, albeit one laced with a heavy dose of sarcasm, with Smith's lyric prophetically announcing, "Repetition in the music and we're never gonna lose it".

The sound was poor and the musicianship rudimentary, but the commitment, range and charisma were there for all to see. It was a phenomenal debut but before The Fall could move on, they needed to find a drummer who shared at least some of the group's ethos. The answer was close to hand.

Prior to The Fall, Bramah had been a member of a putative group called Nuclear Angel, which also included Karl Burns. "I first met Karl Burns on the street," recalls Bramah. "He had this picture of Hitler and two of his henchmen and one had a ring round his head and Karl was insisting this was his father. That was my first meeting with Karl Burns, this mad kid claiming his dad was a Nazi."

Burns was a natural musician on guitar and drums. Nuclear Angel never performed live but used to rehearse in the cellar of a shoe shop off Deansgate (in Manchester city centre) that was owned by the bass player's father. Here they would trash out New York Dolls and Stooges covers – until one night they got carried away and trashed all their equipment. At the time Burns had long hair and was into Heavy Metal, but Bramah persuaded him to give the new group a chance. "Dave" therefore holds the dubious honour of being the first of many members to be sacked from The Fall.

The Fall's second gig took place on 3 June at a 'Stuff the Jubilee' festival (1977 marked 25 years of the

Queen's reign) in a space known as The Squat on Devas Street. Earlier the group had attended an anti-Jubilee demo. "There was about 12 of us," Baines recalls. "Someone tried to unfurl this banner with 'Stuff the Jubilee' and the police came along and said, 'Put that banner down'. He refused saying it was his democratic right to protest and they just pulled him into the back of a police van and kicked his head in. So that was the end of the demo."

The Squat was situated in a decrepit building that had once been the home of the Royal Manchester College of Music. When the College revealed plans to demolish the building, it was occupied by students who then successfully campaigned for it to be turned into a live music venue. Other local groups appearing at 'Stuff the Jubilee' included The Drones, Warsaw (who would soon rename themselves Joy Division), The Worst and The Negatives (which included Paul Morley on guitar and photographer Kevin Cummins on drums). Baines, who now had his own keyboard, remembers the night well: "I played the national anthem with all these explosion sounds from my new keyboard. It was called a Snoopy and the week after I bought it, it got reviewed in *Sounds* or *Melody Maker* as the worst keyboard you could get – totally slated. It was just the cheapest, but even so I never did pay off the loan."

Later that month The Fall played a Rock Against Racism benefit supporting The Buzzcocks and The Verbalis at North East London Polytechnic. As Martin Bramah explains, there was always a strong left wing element in the group, but they were wary of bandwagons. "The core of that left wing attitude was working class struggle and that's what we related to. Una was a very strong feminist and would be prepared to strike up an argument in a pub with any man who said anything remotely sexist. Tony Frial was a member of the local Communist Party."

These were politically polarised times. A month later in August 1977 there were violent clashes as demonstrators tried to halt a National Front march through Lewisham, South London. Although appreciating

the exposure Rock Against Racism gigs gave the group, Smith found the populist and sloganeering attitude of the organisers ideologically suspect. "I was disillusioned very quickly," he told Ian Penman in *NME* in August 1978. "I'd always equated left wing politics with revolution... What happens is before you go on they say, 'Will you hold this poster up?', and it's a picture of Belsen. 'DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN'. I would say, 'We're a political band, that's what we sing about.' But they want you to make announcements between songs, they see you as entertainment. You might as well be singing Country & Western."

Along with Rock Against Racism benefits, The Buzzcocks continued to be the best source of gigs for the new group. On 4 July The Fall supported The Buzzcocks at the launch party of the Vortex at Crackers on Wardour Street, London. The Buzzcocks were now the leading group in Manchester, and in August signed to United Artists for £75,000, which must have seemed like a fortune at the time. Record company interest in other Manchester groups was stimulated by articles such as Paul Morley's cover story for *NME* in July 1977. The cover line read, "Manchester: The Truth Behind The Bizarre Cult Sweeping A City's Youth." The article featured The Buzzcocks, Howard Devoto, Slaughter And The Dogs and The Drones. The Fall were classed – alongside Warsaw and The Worst – as interesting newcomers.

Over the weekend of 1-2 October the new Manchester groups put together their first real collective show of strength. The venue was the Electric Circus, an ex-knogo hall situated two miles north of the city centre. Like many Manchester venues, it had seen better days, but its souzy informality was perfect for the new groups and their fans. In fact it was the popularity of the local groups that led to the club's downfall. The Electric Circus had a legal capacity of 280, but the likes of The Buzzcocks were regularly attracting audiences of 500 or more. By October the club was facing closure due to numerous breaches of fire regulations.



The line-up for the first night of the two day festival consisted of Manicured Noise, The Swords, Big In Japan, Steel Pulse and The Drones. The second night opened with Warsaw, followed by The Prefects, The Worst, The Fall, the debut of Howard Devoto's new group, Magazine, and finally The Buzzcocks. At the end of the night there was a stage invasion, and as with many Manchester gigs of the time, John The Postman came on to sing a version of "Louie Louie". Both nights were recorded by Virgin and selected tracks were released on a 10" album, *Short Circuit*, in June 1978. The two songs by The Fall – "Stepping Out" and "Last Orders", both dominated by Tony Friel's lead basslines – represented the group's first appearance on vinyl.

By the time of the Electric Crows festival The Fall had found champions in the music press in the shape of Paul Morley at *NME* and Chris Brauner at *Melody Maker*. Both writers emphasised how the group's strong political content, and complex song structures placed it in a different league from its peers. The Fall were growing in confidence and hitting a peak of productivity, but they were still loosely organised as a collective, and decision making was increasingly difficult. In an attempt to solve the problem, a new figure was brought into the group's structure.

Kay Carroll was almost ten years older than the rest of the group and had already been married, had two children, got divorced and was now a nurse at Prestwich Hospital. It was there that she met Una Baines and she soon became a regular at the Kingswood Road soirées, eventually moving into the flat. "When I heard the band for the first time it blew me away," says Carroll. "I wasn't expecting it at all, I wasn't expecting anything to tell you the truth, but their sound was so hypnotic, they had a sound like Can, and Mark's poetry was – and still is – just pure genius. I was hooked!"

As The Fall's workrate increased, Smith's prolonged absences from his office desk became increasingly problematic, and he eventually left to sign on the dole.

It was not long before he was joined by Carroll, who used part of her last pay cheque to pay for a phone to be installed in the flat, so she didn't have to use the public phone box across the road to book gigs.

At the end of October, The Buzzcocks released "Organism Addict", their first single for United Artists, and set off on a UK tour. Among the support acts were The Worst, The Flys and The Fall. Richard Bawn, The Buzzcocks' manager, was very supportive of the group and the following month put up the money for its first studio session.

On 9 November the group went into Manchester's Indigo Studios and recorded four songs, "Bingo Master's Breakout", "Psycho Mafia", "Repetition" and a version of "Frightened". The plan was for all the tracks to be released by Bawn on either *New Hormones* or *United Artists* as a 17 minute EP, but interest waned as Bawn's time was increasingly taken up with managing The Buzzcocks' burgeoning career. The tapes were returned to the group and hawked around various other labels, but none seemed able to deal with The Fall's uncompromising attitude and commitment to self-determination over matters such as marketing. The group thought about releasing a single themselves, but as they could barely afford their own phone it was never going to be a feasible proposition. (Three of the tracks, "Bingo Master's Breakout", "Psycho Mafia" and "Repetition", were eventually released as the group's first single in August 1978 on the Step Forward label.)

By the end of 1977 the Manchester Musicians' Collective had relocated to the Band On The Wall on Swan Street in the Ancoats area of Manchester. Three groups would play each week, with the takings, after expenses, being distributed equally among the musicians. The Fall debuted there on 13 November along with Trevor Wishart and Paddy. The set ended with "Repetition", which Smith prefaced with the warning: "This song's gonna last for three hours." The year ended with a Rock Against Racism benefit on 23 December at Stretford Civic Centre. The Fall

topped a bill that included John Cooper Clarke and The Worst, plus an encore by John The Postman. An ultra-lo-fi recording of The Fall's set was recently released as *Live 1977* by Cog Sinister/Melodram. It was a significant gig for Fall, because, as Bramah announced to the audience: "It's the bass player's last gig. It's like losing your left leg."

The main reason for Friel's departure was his disapproval of the amount of managerial control taken on by Carroll. Bramah and Baines were also concerned about her growing influence and how it was affecting the internal politics of the group. "When Mark and Kay became a team," Bramah explains, "it became a bit of a dictatorship and that changed the band because we'd started as equal friends. Kay was his enforcer, his strength and his multipiece within the band. We all recognised his talent and just put up with things, but I think Kay made it harder to be in the band, especially for Tony, who thought The Fall were as much his vehicle as Mark's. He'd thought of the name and was the primary musician within the band."

Friel had lasted for just eight months. Baines left not long after in early 1978. Later that year, Karl Burns departed, followed by Bramah in April 1979. Within two years of forming, The Fall, with the exception of Mark E. Smith, had a completely new line-up, a pattern of attrition and renewal that has been repeated to this day. After The Fall, Friel went on to form The Passage with Dick Wicks. He is currently the bass player in The Woodbank Street Band. Baines and Bramah subsequently formed The Blue Orchids, and a compilation of their work, *A Darker Bloom: The Blue Orchids Collection*, has just been released by Cherry Red. In 1989 Bramah rejoined The Fall but left again the following year. Today he still writes songs and plays the guitar, but earns his living as a van driver. Baines works at a community centre in Whalley Range, South Manchester. She helps organise the annual Whalley Range festival and, showing admirable consistency, is in the process of setting up a women's musicians' collective. As for Mark E. Smith...



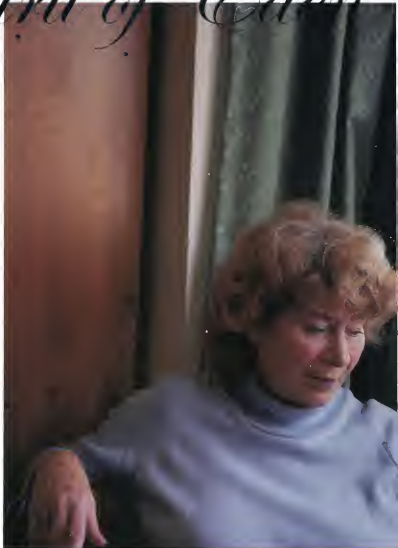
24 YEARS AFTER RETIRING FROM THE BATTLEGROUND OF BRITISH FOLK,

Shirley Collins

IS EXPERIENCING RENEWED INTEREST, IN PART CHAMPIONED BY CURRENT 93'S DAVID TIBET. WITH A CAREER-SPANNING BOX SET IN PREPARATION, SHE TALKS TO MIKE BARNES ABOUT HER SINGLEMINDED ROLE IN THE POST-WAR FOLK REVIVAL, SONG-COLLECTING FIELD TRIPS WITH ALAN LOMAX, AND HER QUEST FOR THE TRUE ROOTS OF PRE-INDUSTRIAL FOLK VIA COLLABORATIONS WITH GUITARIST DAVY GRAHAM, HER SISTER DOLLY COLLINS, AND THE ALBION BAND

Photos: Eva Hornumel

Spirit of Eden





"The main body of [folk music] is just based on myth and the Bible and plague and famine and all kinds of things like that which are nothing but mystery. Roses growing right up out of people's hearts and naked cats in bed with spears growing right out of their backs and seven years of this and eight years of that and it's all really something that nobody can really touch"

— Bob Dylan, September 1965 press conference, Austin, Texas

"Now the girls of the country, they're all glad I know/To see Polly Vaughan a-lying so low/You could stand them on a mountain, and stand them all in a row/And her beauty it would shine forth like a fountain of snow" — Shirley Collins, "Polly Vaughan", 1967-68

"As a family we just loved to sing," says Shirley Collins, casting her mind back to a youth infused with song. Every time a child was born to the family of Collins's grandfather, he would carry the baby outside so they could look at the sky and listen to the birds. Such is the ancestry of one of the great English voices of the last 40 years (albeit retired for the last 20): one of the most significant figures in the English traditional music reveals which have recurred throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s. She was at the right hand of sound archivist Alan Lomax on his epic quests in search of the heart of American folk music in the late 50s and early 60s. Her albums — solo, with her sister Dolly, and with the electric Albion Band — are some of the most innovative and adventurous in the folk idiom.

Yet as her voice fell silent at the end of the 1970s, so all of her albums slipped out of print and by the early 90s she was in danger of becoming merely a folk memory. Now, thanks partly to the admiration of a diverse range of fans including Current 93's David Tibet, Jim O'Rourke, Christoph Hoemann and Keiji Haino, as well as more mainstream figures such as Billy Bragg and Blur guitarist Graham Coxon, her complete back catalogue is available once more, and a four CD box set chronicling the span of her career, adding unreleased material, is imminent.

Born in 1935 in Hastings, Sussex on England's south coast, Collins grew up in a singing family that formed the nucleus of a local church choir. "I think it was a little bit unusual," she says. "I don't think most families stood around a piano or around Grammys's harmonium, as we did, Aunt Grace and Granny and Granddad were the next street away and we were together all the time."

"I remember at my primary school hearing a song called 'Turpin Hero', which sounded like the tune of 'Greensleeves' to me," she recalls. "I can still remember how struck I was by it and how English I thought it was. I had a concept of Englishness even then, and I also had a sense of history."

Her first public singing appearances were at Labour Party and Communist Party socials in Hastings when she was just 16, accompanied by her elder sister Dolly. A year later she moved to London to find work. She started buying books of folksongs and spent hours researching in the library at Cecil Sharp House in North London, the headquarters of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, named after England's most famous folksong collector. She also began singing in

folk clubs like the Cranbourne and Cecil Sharp's basement. At the time director's son Peter Kennedy, was trying to make the place more appealing to young people with basement concerts that played a part in what became known as the 1950s folk revival.

In the contemporary search for roots, the folk music traditions of the British Isles, and England in particular, is held in less high regard than most other indigenous musics — especially by the English. The uniquely English affliction of playing down their native culture is a major factor, as is the complex matter of residual post-imperial guilt. English folk also lacks the rebel spirit of Celtic music, especially from Ireland and Scotland, where it occupies a more prominent place in contemporary culture. That this rebel spirit was often targeted at the English, who have a long and ignominious history of subjugating their neighbouring countries, is also significant. Sadly, such factors have contributed to one stream of thought that English folk music is somehow synonymous with nationalism. Yet, since the songs were written and sung by working people at the sharp end of Albion's sword, this viewpoint is ill-informed, to say the least.

But English folk music has regularly resurfaced into public consciousness. In the early 1990s the massive upheaval of the Second World War was a still a vivid memory and, living in a state of post-war awestruck, many went back to the tradition to examine their roots and reassess their identity. By the late 60s, folk music's pastoralism became entwined in the development of psychedelic rock, spawning groups like The Incredible String Band and Doctor Strangely Strange. In 1969 Fairport Convention shifted away from the American music which had featured so prominently on their early albums and, with *Liege and Lief*, showed how vital a homegrown approach to folk rock could be.

"One of the reasons for the folk revival," postulates Collins, "was the interest the BBC took in folk music, with programmes such as *Country Magazine* and *As I Roved Out*. The latter had an audience of 12 to 15 million people every week, which is an extraordinary figure. The success of these programmes led to the BBC reading and funding a huge collecting project in the 50s, and that inspired off a great amount of interest. People just liked the music then — and of course there was no television."

"It may also have had something to do with the fact that a Labour government was voted in after the war, much to everyone's surprise, as Churchill had been such a hero. And there were Ewan McColl and Al Lloyd, who were politically interested in the music of the people. Together, these two things kickstarted it."

Unfortunately, certain musicians became intoxicated by romantic notions of "Old England" as a kitsch picture postcard Arcadia. Those looking to lampoon popular folk music had to look no further than Steeleye Span's 1975 hit "All Around My Hat", on which the seven great folk rock group churned out rumbustious, clumping pub rock. In America, roots music had been successfully and powerfully assimilated into rock, first and foremost by Bob Dylan, but in the UK it never fully escaped an image of unfashionable inconsequence. Commercial considerations also played their part. Few people are

IN THIS COUNTRY THE WORKING CLASS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DEPRIVED AND NEGLECTED AND THEIR MUSIC ALONG WITH THEM. PEOPLE THINK A FARM LABOURER CAN'T POSSIBLY SING A GOOD SONG

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW DODD FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

familiar with the gritty, sinister music of a 1970s group such as Mister Fox, for example.

"Only Ralph Vaughan Williams and George Butterworth really understood English harmony," says Collins, who feels that the problems with English music took root back in the pre-gramophone age. In the early years of the 20th century, Vaughan Williams and Butterworth both incorporated folk songs into their compositions (the latter was killed in the First World War), and energetic archivists and researchers such as Cecil Sharp and Lucy Broadwood, amassed and transcribed prodigious collections of tunes, dances and songs that might otherwise have passed out of the record. However, the way they reclaimed and rearranged the songs diluted the rawness and savage beauty of many of them, which became little more than drawing-room duets for voice and pianoforte. Subsequent attempts by established composers at setting folk songs were likewise generally unsuccessful. Percy Grainger, also a collector, served up a series of fancy concoctions, while Benjamin Britten's secular arrangement of "The Foggy Dew" finds him at his very worst.

By the 1950s this misappropriation of traditional material had provoked a reaction among traditional singers. The singer and musicologist Al Lloyd looked at the problem from his perspective as a member of the British Communist Party. Lloyd still sang English rural music but in his 1944 book, *The Singing Englishman*, he contended that much of it had lost its bite as long ago as the 18th century, when it was sentimentalised by the broadsheet ballad writers. He was dismayed how those which burlesqued country manners and mores into "clodhopping bumpkin fodder" had been assimilated back into that very culture.

Aware of the growing popularity of American folk and skiffle music in folk clubs, Ewan McColl passionately promoted English song. McColl, who also came from the hard left, had been collecting songs in the industrial areas of northern England. Those commenting on the conditions brought about by the Industrial Revolution, he felt, were now more relevant to working people. He was a leading figure in The Cat's, a collection of revival singers who shared his political views and was perhaps the first person to coin the term 'industrial music'.

Having grown up with rural music, Collins saw things rather differently, championing songs that honestly conveyed the experience of rural life. "In this country the working class have always been exploited and despised and neglected, and their music along with them," she says. "People tend to think that a farm labourer can't possibly sing a good song."

In the 1950s, London's folk scene was still small scale, with Kennedy, John Hasted and Ewan McColl arranging gigs for traditional singers like George Maynard of Sussex and Harry Cox of Norfolk. Collins's singing was also getting her noticed, not least by McColl, who invited the 18-year-old Sharley to sing at two remarkable Iron Curtain-era events: the World Youth Police Festival in Warsaw and later as part of his 'ballad opera' presented at the Kremlin in Moscow.

Her horizons were further broadened when she met Alan Lomax, the Texan folklorist who had already

recorded thousands of songs on trips throughout the USA and Europe. The two became lovers living together for a while in Highbury, North London, where they played host to visiting American bluesmen including Memphis Slim and Muddy Waters. Collins developed a fascination with Cecil Sharp's early 20th century collection, *English Folk Songs From The Southern Appalachians*, and was excited to be offered work as an editorial assistant on Lomax's book, *The Folk Songs Of North America*.

In 1958 she recorded her first album. In fact, she produced two albums – *False True Lovers on Folkways* in the USA (1959) and *Sweet England* on the British Argo label (1960) – from the 37 songs she got down during a two day session, featuring herself on five string bango, with some guitar accompaniment. Among them was a version of "Turpin Hero", while the family influence made itself felt with the inclusion of "Just As The Tide Was Flowing", a song she used to hear her Aunt Grace sing.

Despite the intense recording schedule and a naive quality she can now discern in her singing, her voice already sounds supple and pure. These recordings laid the foundation of her singing style for the next two decades. She was wary of the self-conscious mannerisms creeping into the delivery of singers like McColl and Lloyd – "a bleat in the voice and a fadling on notes that traditional singers don't do," she puts it. In contrast, hers retained its "naturalness" and the intonations of her Sussex accent. "It's like an extension of one's speech," she says.

Alan Lomax soon returned to the USA, but asked Collins to accompany him on a song-collecting trip to the South. She embarked on the five day Atlantic voyage in April 1959. "I had absolutely no idea of what I was getting into," she admits. Once in America, the 2000 mile journey proved to be full of eye-opening experiences.

"This old lady in Kentucky said to me, 'Where are you from, young lady?' I said England, and she said, 'England over the water?' A great many people were thrilled to meet somebody from what they considered to be the old country. I was able to swap songs with a lot of them, especially in the mountains of Kentucky and Arkansas where they know songs that I know. English versions of, as the songs had gone across with the settlers. I was always aware we were strangers and interlopers in a way. They weren't always going to let you know what they were thinking. Alan was wonderful; he was very experienced in the field, of course, and he was able to put people of all classes and all sorts at ease immediately."

Although archaic, ingrained attitudes were slowly changing, the pair found that racial segregation and bigotry were still rife.

"There was one white singer in Huntsville, Alabama," she remembers. "We had finished recording an all day singing at the Sacred Harp Convention and he slipped the songbook and said, 'This book makes me love my enemies'. Then I happened to tell him we were going to Mississippi over the next couple of days to record black prisoners in the Mississippi State Penitentiary and he said, in a voice devoid of any emotion, 'We don't like niggers here. We don't allow 'em here. Nigger come here last year and the boys ran him to





death with their guns.' To listen to someone say something like that was terrifying."

She has fond memories of hearing such musicians as Texas Gadden and her brother Hobart Smith, Wade Ward, Almeida Riddle and Jimmy Driftwood. She also vividly remembers her first encounter with blues guitarist Mississippi Fred McDowell, who was unknown beyond his locale at the time. "We had been recording [fiddle player] Sid Hemphill and also Miles and Bob Prather, who were old men. They were in their nineties then and were singing stuff that sounded like it had come straight from Africa, with drumming and pipes and incredible dancing as well – winding down and beating on the earth and passing dust over their foreheads. We'd been there two nights and they said, 'You've got to meet a neighbour of ours, he plays blues', and I thought, 'No, don't bring anyone younger in here, don't break the spell.' On the third night this very slight figure walked out of the wood into the clearing. He'd been picking his cotton crop all day and was wearing dungarees and carrying his guitar. The minute I heard him I realised I was in the presence of a remarkably great blues player."

Arriving back in Britain, Collins set about trying to infuse the Anglo-Appalachian songs and free-spirited folk blues she and Lomax had gathered in America with material from Britain and New Zealand. The result was the epochal *Folk Roots, New Routes* (1964), on which she was accompanied by the phenomenally dextrous acoustic guitarist Davy Graham, a liaison brokered by her then husband, Austin John Marshall. The album is a juxtaposition of two distinct styles and personalities: the pure voiced folk singer and, by the point, young mother, pitched against the romantic, jazz-loving guitarist who would disappear on lengthy kilt-smoking sabbaticals to Tanger to soak up the intoxicating sounds of the Arab quarter. Recalling when she first heard Graham play the Irish traditional tune "She Moves Through The Fair", she says, "Davy turned it inside out and made it the most riveting thing. At that time I was still singing songs from the States like "Nottamun Town", "My Dearest Dear" and "Pretty Saro", when I heard what Davy did with them it was irresistible. He was the most enthralling player, so innovative and so wonderful – he was doing something completely new."

Enriched by two minds newly expanded by travels outside England's austere confines, *Folk Roots* could well be the first 'folk fusion' album, and it cast a long shadow over the subsequent development of British folk. It was hugely influential, not least on guitarists John Renbourn and Bert Jansch, as well as introducing a new range of standards to be reinterpreted by later musicians. 38 years on, it sounds remarkably fresh. On "Pretty Saro", a slow ballad detailing a soldier's tearful thoughts of his faraway lover, Collins's voice soars through space, her highest notes vapourising in the ether. Graham takes on the role of commentator, warping the melody obliquely, yet sympathetically, through Eastern scales, and marking out brooding spaces with his harmonics and dramatic glissandi.

"If you sing a song very straightforwardly," Collins explains, "some people think you don't care or you're being remote. But you're not. But the voice doesn't get



in the way of the song, I've always thought of myself as a conduit between old singers and now, and I do believe in letting the song speak for itself."

Her singing, marked by subtle ornamental nuances, has a more mercenary character than most. Yet her efforts not to intrude too much on the inner life of the song earned her a certain reputation for coolness and detachment.

"I was called 'cool,'" she says, "and then people say there's a trancelike or a dreamlike quality about it and I think, no, in a way it's very down to earth singing – whatever background or accompaniment, my singing was always the same. Some people think it's a lovely voice, some people don't. One bloke wrote me a poem [and gave it to me] at the end of a folk club I thought, 'This is going to be romantic', but it started off: 'four potato voice...' I thought, 'What does he mean?' she says, laughing. "He said it was a compliment because he liked potatoes. Maybe he thought it was earthy or something."

Reactions towards Folk Roots's progressive treatment of traditional material were mixed. "A lot of people hated it," she recalls wryly. "Ewan McColl and The Critics group were keen on protest music and 'industrial music', and I think they despised me because I was concentrating entirely on rural labouring class music. They had an agenda and it was always political. McColl told me once that I was singing too many love songs. What gave them the right to tell anyone what they could or couldn't sing? They wrote a piece about me in one of the magazines – it was anonymous but I knew it came from the McColl camp – which likened me to a Jersey cow lumbering along. The last two lines were: 'Dolly's nimble fingers carry her along/The Lady Baden-Powell of English song.'"

Coming from a resolutely socialist family, Collins was angered by the unfair allusion to the English aristocracy. Regardless, she strengthened her resolve to pursue her own course in isolation from the earnest folk cliques. Yet because she now preferred to concentrate on distilling the spirit of English song, she was keen to leave David Graham's jazzy settings

behind, and her working relationship with the unpredictable guitarist floundered.

"By then," she explains, "I'd heard so much English material via the field recordings made in the 1890s and gone back and looked at songs collected in the 1890s through to the First World War. The stuff was just so gorgeous that I thought, 'This is the sort of music that's going to last me a lifetime'. And also it's sort of baned – people don't know about it. There was no point doing Irish music, because Irish singers can sing it better, and I had lost my romantic view of America and American music, I was English. It was *duft* not to do it."

Collins began working with her sister Dolly, herself a skilled musician who had recently been living and working in a double-decker bus in a field outside Hastings, with a piano installed on the lower deck. "She was there for some time," says Shirley. "We had Irish ancestors and Dolly was convinced that the Irish part of her was gypsy. Then mother got a Romany caravan and lived in the same field for a year."

Their first recording together was *The Sweet Primeroses* in 1967. Dolly Collins had studied composition under Alan Bush at the Workers' Music Association and played a miniature wooden pipe-or-flute-organ, based on an original design dating back to 1643. Perversely, this instrument was seen by purists as too radical – proof only that "folk", to some ears, was not considered to have any provenance earlier than the melodians and accordions of the early 19th century.

Over the next decade their creative partnership yielded impressive results. A number of factors marked out the Collins sisters from their peers. Shirley's research in the chaotic library of Cecil Sharp House was so assiduous – going through piles of manuscripts, notes and letters, in boxes and on the floor – that the songs she chose to record were exceptional. And, crucially, looking more deeply into each song, the two sisters were able to draw more out than most.

"Lovely Joan", from the 1968 album *The Power Of The True Love Knot*, is an example of their peculiar alchemy in action. (The song had already been

popularised by Vaughan Williams as the middle section of his *Fantasia On Greensleeves*) | Shirley sings the tune with casual ease, while Dolly's pipe-organ counterpoint spins the melodic material out into serpentine lines punctuated by repeated appoggios, all of which changes subtly from verse to verse. Renaissance compositions by the likes of Monteverdi and Purcell could be one point of reference for these intricately worked pieces, although as Shirley points out, "I think Dolly's first influence really would have been the church harmonies of the carols that the family sang at Christmas."

"The only problem we ever had," she replies to a question about whether there was any sibling rivalry in their working relationship, "was the first arrangement she ever wrote, which was for three French horns. I couldn't cope with that. But then we discovered the flute-organ and everything was taken care of. It was just beautiful to sing against, and we had the same mind really as far as music was concerned."

"I provided the songs and Dolly did the rest," she continues. "I can't read music, but I would spot a song and the words would just leap off the page, so I would copy the notes down, take them to Dolly and say, 'What's this one like, Dolly? She'd play it for me and if I liked the tune, she'd do an arrangement. All the arrangements are entirely hers and I wouldn't have changed a note.'"

In 1969 the sisters landed a recording contract with Harvest. EMI's new 'progressive' music subsidiary, "along with Deep Purple and The Edgar Broughton Band – a lovely mix," Collins notes. The label embraced eclecticism, but even in this milieu the Collins sisters found themselves on the periphery. Although they were aware of the contemporary musical scene – *The Power Of The True Love Knot* features contributions from their friends Robin Williamson and Mike Heron, from *The Incredible String Band* – they were becoming increasingly difficult to pigeonhole, and had no contact with other Harvest artists beyond performing at the label's launch party at the Roundhouse in London in 1969. "I can't remember what we played but people were a bit baffled," she

streams half of water, half of blood; people cursed to do penance as the tongue of a bell – but part of its mystery comes from the way lyrics evolve over time. Shirley particularly loves these odd conjunctions, which can take songs into a different dimension. “It’s like being in a dream state where the meaning comes in and out of focus,” she says. On “Little Hugh Of Lincoln”, for example, the English version starts, “It rains, it rains in merry Lincoln”, but it ended on the mouths of some of the American pioneers as “It rains, it rains American corn”.

“Christ Made A Trance” is another example. The title is strange enough – possibly meaning “trance”, derived from the French “tranche” – but the song’s words are truly baffling. “Hell is deep and Hell is dark and Hell is full of moss,” Shirley recites. “What shall we do for our saviour as he has done for us?”

“Which is beautiful in its own right,” she continues. “But there is this little mystery of why Hell is full of moss. The general feeling is that Hell is full of remorse.”

Following the break up of her marriage to Austin John Marshall, Collins married Ashley Hutchings, the original bassist in Fairport Convention, who had recently founded Steeleye Span. In 1971 the couple formed The Albion Band with a view to avoiding Transatlantic influences and concentrating on electrifying the English folk tradition.

“I thought, ‘Christ! This is folk music and it’s got energy, it’s got real appeal and it’s invigorating’. The first time we went out with The Albion Dance Band – a big electric band playing dance music, Renaissance dance tunes, English country dance tunes – it was fabulous. It was the most exciting thing of all. It filled you with energy, it filled you with spirit.”

The group’s first album (as Shirley Collins And The Albion Country Dance Band), *No Roses*, was an ambitious project featuring 26 musicians, including sister Dolly, most of Fairport Convention, Lai and Mike Waterson, even Lol Coxhill on alto saxophone. Despite a few lumpy rhythms, it was deftly enough arranged to prevent the whole edifice from tumbling down. Indeed, it withstands the test of time as a folk rock benchmark, especially the dramatic, episodic “Poor Murdered Woman”. In the right hands, it argues, electric folk music can accommodate bassoons, hurdy-gurdys and serpents, as well as electric guitars.

Although enamoured with the group, Shirley took a break from touring to spend more time with her children. Later, however, she worked on the electric dance albums *Morris On* and *Son Of Morris On* and accompanied Hutchings in the acoustic Etchingham Steam Band. She also sang on later Albion Band albums, but her spell with them ended in personal crisis and disaster.

The group were appearing in Kerth Dewhurst’s dramatisation of Flora Thompson’s book *Lark Rise To Candleford* at London’s National Theatre in 1977. Upset by circumstances culminating in the break up of her marriage to Hutchings, Collins found singing in public emotionally difficult. Her voice was as strong as ever, but sometimes when she opened her mouth, nothing would come out. Martin Carthy, who was also appearing in the production, covered for her at these



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TRADITIONAL SONGS AND I THINK MY INSTINCT WITH THE SONGS WAS
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moments. Even so, she was left feeling humiliated.

"I never wanted singing lessons, which is a pity," she admits. "I think when I did lose my voice if I had have always trying to encourage me to sing again but I can't really do it. But I thought the least I could do was try 'All The Pretty Little Horses' because it's only four lines long. But even so I didn't think I could do it properly."

In retrospect, her retirement seems as sad as one of her songs. Once she felt that she was letting down the songs — and by inference the whole tradition — by being unable to guarantee performances at the highest level, she was compelled to stop. "Well, I suppose if you're singing songs about true love and heartbreak and whatnot, if it happens to you, you might as well have a real reaction to it," she cunts grimly.

Her last recording with Oolly was *For As Many As Will* (1978). The title referred to the fact that the sisters' music was never really taken up in the way they had hoped. With Collins's retirement hanging over the recording, the sisters chose to fill it with songs that they particularly liked but had not recorded. This gives an added poignancy to "Gilderoy", where Oolly's elegant piano frames one of Shirley's most beautiful vocal performances. Elsewhere, Oolly experiments with new voices, pitching, for example, synthesizer against euphonium. There is also a suite from John Gay's *Beggars' Opera*, for which Oolly wrote an entire score. Thereafter Shirley performed sporadically onstage with her sister, and in a short-lived trio with Julie Carter and Jim Younger. In 1990 Garry Graham was quoted as saying he was keen to rekindle their partnership, but nothing came of it.

Her "resurrection", as she calls it, was kickstarted by Current 93's *Owld Tibet*. Subsequently it has been continued by the British folk label Fiedg'ing. In 1992 Tibet released the compilation *Fountain Of Snow* on his Durto label, which was followed by the label's release of *Harking Back*, a live album of Shirley and Oolly from 1978-9. It might seem like an unlikely meeting of worlds, but Tibet explains that he recognised a spirituality and purity in Shirley's music that he had always pursued in his own work.

"I bought *The Power Of The True Love Knot*," he says, "and the moment I listened to it I became completely obsessed, and I wasn't somebody who was particularly interested in folk music. The problem for me is that a lot of folk music doesn't rise above the genre, but from the very beginning Shirley's music was operating on a higher level of emotional intensity than any other artist, not just in folk. It was something so beautiful, so pure and profound, and so simple it was like being speared in the heart."

"I think why her popularity is spreading," he continues, "is that people see in Shirley the epitome of everyone who tries to create selflessly. Shirley transcends all types of music and finally transcends music itself. What she does is so beautiful, so profound and so lacking in artifice that for me it exists on an exalted plane."

Even more remarkably, in 1993 Tibet persuaded Shirley to break her silence with a spoken word piece on Current 93's *Thunder Perfect Mind* album, and she later sang "All The Pretty Little Horses" for their *The*

Stanes Come Marching Saddy Home.

"I did it partly because Tibet became a good friend," Collins says. "He put those CDs out and he was always trying to encourage me to sing again but I can't really do it. But I thought the least I could do was try 'All The Pretty Little Horses' because it's only four lines long. But even so I didn't think I could do it properly."

Oolly Collins's sudden death in 1995 left a number of her projects unrecorded, including a suite of songs. *The Rity Of War*, based on the work of First World War poets, a secular mass and a complete score for *The Beggars' Opera*. Shirley is hopeful that somehow they might be realised. Meanwhile, a songbook of their music is also in the works.

In her retirement Shirley has promoted the music she loves through her talks and her work in schools, and has recently become a patron of the Folk Southwest organisation. She is concerned that its essence is again becoming diluted.

"I don't think people are tapping back in quite the way I did when I was young," she complains. "The young singers nowadays are taking songs from the first revivalists, the 1950s and 1960s. They're not delving into anything, and I think it shows in their performances. For me it's essential to go back to an original source, a field singer, otherwise you're not getting the real thing — it's a tad superficial."

"I remember the first time I went to the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam, you just stand there absolutely smitten — it's as if you haven't seen one before, and it's the same for me with the songs. If you don't hear the real thing, you're not really hearing it. So I always plead with young people to just enjoy the experience. They're missing out on so much if they don't go back."

In the meantime, she has just completed her first successful studio session in 24 years, recording a new song, *Lost In A Wood*, destined for a compilation of English folk songs and their Australian counterparts called *Song Links*. Due for a late summer release on Fellside.

Before the end of the interview, Collins leads me down to the sea by her home in Hove on the Sussex coast. It's almost high tide and the wind is unusually fierce. Waves crash against the beach huts on the landward side of the promenade. "I do sing on the beach," she confides, "I go to the beach every day if I can." Although her local stretch of coastline is the only place she is likely to be heard performing these days, she keeps tabs on the folk scene, and is still buzzing from seeing Martin Carthy perform down the road in Lewes the previous night. "He was wonderful, everything was so concentrated and really pared down," she enthuses. "He was talking about how important this music is and going over some of the lines of it in order to say this is extraordinary stuff, this is great poetry. And yet hardly anybody knows about it." Within Sound, a four CD box set

chronicling Shirley Collins's career from 1955-82, will be released in the autumn on Fiedg'ing. Anthems In Eden and Love, Death And The Lady are on BGO; *The Power Of The True Love Knot* is on Fiedg'ing; *Fountains Of Snow* and *Harking Back* are on Durto.

AS THE INSTIGATOR OF PLUNDERPHONICS AND THE MEMESIS OF MICHAEL JACKSON AND COPYRIGHT LAWYERS WORLDWIDE,

John Oswald

HAS BECOME NOTORIOUS FOR SUBTLY TESTING THE LIMITS OF CORPORATE CONTROL OF ARTISTIC PRODUCTION
TST FROM THE MULTILAYERED SAMPLE COMPOUNDS OF GRAYFOLOED TO THE SUPERDENSE SOUND SWARMS OF PLEKURE,
THE AMERICAN SAMPLIST AND SAXOPHONIST CLAIMS FAIR USE IN PURSUIT OF GAZZLING NEW FORMS

By David Byrne, David Byrne, David Byrne

Undoing



time



"It's quite simple," deadpans Canadian composer and free improviser John Oswald, emitting the weary sigh of the plunderphonics copyright violator hounded by his own notoriety. "I love the music. In my mind, it's certainly not an act of vandalism. The way I've been presenting plunderphonics in all cases is by fully attributing and crediting all the sources I use on the packaging. Well, that seems like foolhardy vandalism to me. A vandal wears a mask when he throws a brick through the window of McDonald's. He doesn't set himself up."

Seated in a hotel breakfast bar in Nantes, France, the day after performing at the Oblique Lu Nights festival, John Oswald wants to talk music, even though he's fully aware that his work tends to raise all sorts of extra-musical issues about copyright and ethics. Perpetrated against select icons of popular culture such as Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton and Jim Morrison, his plunderphonic music has been lauded as a great act of sonic vandalism aimed at deslodging mass culture's colonisation of the sound environment. But to simplistically proclaim him as a cultural bulwark against the relentless bombardment of a monolithic global music industry is to seriously underestimate the full significance of his challenge. "I don't think of it as an attempt to perpetrate any sort of damage," he counters, "either to the artist's reputation or to the music that I'm using. I'm just like some producer who wasn't asked to work on somebody's material but comes up with crazy ideas and tries to make it sound good."

Oswald's realisation of plunderphonics is less a Dadaist defilement of icons than a construction of music anew in the act of deconstructing it, and his most powerful creations shape a life independent of the parent pieces from which they were sampled. They are living, breathing proof of the power of plunderphonics. Placed in the hands of "untrained" musicians like himself, plunderphonics liberates sound from "specialist" composers, players and regulators. That certain interested parties — music publishers, giant entertainment conglomerates — have managed to legally suppress much of his work to date is in itself a testimony to plunderphonic music's enormous potential.

Last year, Oswald prepared a stunning two CD set, called 69/96, anthologising and annotating most of his plunderphonic work of the last two decades. The set turns rock history on its head, rewriting the evolution of contemporary music from deep inside its most basic paradigms. The set starts with the sustained piano chord from the end of The Beatles' "A Day In The Life", which is interrupted and restated again and again. From there it accelerates through the 20th century, with fantasy groupings coalescing in the ether. Free bassist Barre Phillips communes with Steve Lacy, Larry Dubin and Cecil Taylor in a free improvising group that beams its performers in from four different solo gigs. Three Big Sisterbecks conjure a reading of "In A Mist" that throbs in and out of sync, creating a delicious textural complexity; and Dolly Parton duets with her own lower pitched voice, which sounds strikingly male. "Is it possible that Ms Parton's remarkable voice is actually the Alvinized (chipmunked) result of some unsung ghost Lieder crooning these songs at elegiac tempos which are then gender polianised to fit the tits?" speculates Oswald in his notes. "Speed and sex are again revealed as components intrinsic to the music business."

Due to the results of earlier legal tussles, Oswald was legally prohibited from distributing 69/96 through his own label Jany. However, the set has been "pirated" by American copyright buccanniers Negativland, who are now disseminating it via their Website. Although Oswald sees a connection between his work and that of Negativland and The Tape Beatles, he doesn't feel

he has anything in common with them other than the subjects of his plunderphonics. Indeed, The Tape Beatles' allegiance to plagiarism actually works against his proposed system of accreditation. "When things come up like copyright issues, we have common ground," he concedes. "But musically, other than admiring Negativland's *U2* record, which I like a lot, I don't think I'm anyone connected to them than I am to Paul McCartney. McCartney's 'Silly Love Songs' is one of my favourite pieces of music, a good example of something where there is a lot more going on than just the incredibly tight lyric everybody defines it by."

Perhaps he's closer in spirit to the current vogue for "bootlegging" mainstream pop by Kid606 and Girls On Top (see *The Wire* 218), who similarly reanimate exquise corpses, casting them in fantasy musical collaborations not unlike those featured on the 69/96 set. Using sonic quotes for his building blocks, Oswald morphs, stretches and transforms them into hallucinogenic pieces where Elvis Presley jams with Cecil Taylor, and Tim Buckley drifts like a ghost through the Electrica vaults. Revealing the familiar in a different light, plunderphonics works both as a senuous art statement and a penning of the untouchable pomposity of pop stardom. It produces incisive cultural critique and, most importantly, great psychedelic music.

Oswald's system of plunderphonics is a by-product of the various strategies he developed to enable a non-musician like himself to compose music. He recalls, "When I was first doing these things I just felt that it was an interesting way of working, and one that I seemed to have some sort of musical adeptness at. Really," he insists, "it was my way of making normal music. When I was a kid I was attempting to figure out music but I was a singularly untalented musician, so I didn't really have the choice of playing in a bar mitzvah band or an orchestra. Every time I would go to a music teacher I'd be asked not to come back. I pretty much had to sneak into various institutions of higher education to see what was happening. I never passed the auditions. I couldn't even get in the high school band, I had to steal the instruments."

The discovery of pre-existing recordings as a sound source liberated composition from the hold of the specialists. A powerful compositional tool was now within his reach. He says he scarcely gave a thought to the small matter of who owned the recordings, and he never intended plunderphonics to be an art political platform for challenging copyright ownership, though he has since been forced to engage with the issue or be destroyed by it. For Oswald, the debates deflect people from hearing his work as music rather than as a thieves' charter. "My game plan has always been to create stuff that justifies its existence by being intrinsically interesting as a listening experience whether or not its existence is currently practical," he says. "So I perhaps naively assume that if an audience really wants it, the consumer environment will adapt an acquisition strategy."

For Oswald, plunderphonics is before everything else a process for rigorously pursuing the internal logic of a piece of music, its tone and structure determined by the expressive characteristics encoded in his source samples. His Grateful Dead project, *Grayfolded* (1994-95), affirms his claim for plunderphonics as a musical pledge of faith. *Grayfolded* is his double CD plunderphone take on The Grateful Dead's signature tune "Dark Star" – his best known work by default, since it's the only one readily available. Made after The Dead's invitation to plunder their vaults, it's also his most complete realisation of the plunderphonics concept. Running to some 100 minutes over two temporally defined movements, disc one's Transitive Axis is so seamless, it sounds uncannily like The Grateful Dead playing in real time and on transcendental form. Drawn from concert recordings

spanning 25 years, it creates the extraordinary illusion of the group jamming with any number of incarnations of themselves inside the song's identifiable albeit timestretched frame. The subtlety of Oswald's timebending montages, dissolves and transpositions only becomes apparent when you consult the CD's time maps, which detail the origins of its constituent parts.

"I was a bit surprised because *Grayfolded* was so critically successful in comparison to almost any other Grateful Dead disc," Oswald says. "Both amongst half the Deadheads – the half who didn't hate it – who listened it to the mind-altering capability of being at a really good Dead show, and amongst the general public, who have shown no interest in other Dead records. So I made a good record for a group who are notorious for making bad records but are nonetheless quite popular. This seemed like a calling card for more lessons, but I guess either no one else wants to sound like The Grateful Dead – in other words they assume that I'm a 'one trick pony' producer – or I just don't get out enough to meet people."

That the bulk of Oswald's plunderphonics releases has been forced underground means his calling cards are hard to come by. His difficulties stem from the inclusion on his 1989 Plunderphonic disc of his Michael Jackson "tribute," "dub," credited to one Allen Osham Jack. Maybe Sony just couldn't see the funny side of hearing Jackson's voice singing lines like "your butt is low", in Oswald's virtual remake. The drum machine kicks are derived from the phonemes in Jackson's vocal, and for the breathtaking choral finale, Oswald processed a smear of Jackson singing the phrase "who's bad" through 10,000 shifting loops of the entire song to create an infinitely deep pool of humming angelic feedback. The "tribute" continued on the CD's artwork, which essentially gives the singer's Bad cover image a sexchange and turns his skincolour white.

From the start, the legal case against Oswald was complicated by his insistence that Plunderphonic was not for sale, though it included a note encouraging not-for-profit home dubbing of the album. With no profits generated, it didn't leave a lot for Sony's lawyers to go after on behalf of their client. And though Oswald openly acknowledged that he had created the whole track from sampled Jackson material, Sony have yet to prove that he had done anything illegal. The legal stalemate leaves him at liberty to create these works, so long as he doesn't distribute them. An unfortunate consequence of his legal struggles is how the reluctant Oswald has since been cast as an anti-corporate crusader. "I hadn't really thought through what my obligations were in relation to this appropriation and transformation and I probably still haven't," he pleads.

"I was making pieces, not thinking about how I could put it out. I mean, what happens when you make a record that has other people's records on it? Are you supposed to call them up, does it matter?"

In Nantes the night before our interview, Oswald delivered a performance largely based on his 1993 *Plexure* album, which was released on John Zorn's Avant label. As the most extreme realisation yet of his plunderphonics concept, he clearly didn't come here to make friends the easy way. It's essentially a rapfire assault of introductions snipped from reels of cheesy gongro sleazy 80s and 90s pop hits like Berlin's "Take My Breath Away" and Robert Palmer's "Addicted to Love". Live, it doesn't work so well. At times it passes in a disorientating blur, unimpeded by any significant tonal variation. The piece prompts the question as to whether Oswald thinks the speed of human perception will ever be fast enough to penetrate the dense layers of his plunderphonics creations.

"Oh yeah," he perks up, enthusing, "that's part and parcel with dealing with the recorded reproduction





medium, the fact that things can be played again and again. Back in Beethoven's days they tended to put repeats of the themes and all that stuff in, because it was quite likely that someone was only going to hear it once in their life. So you want to make sure they knew the theme before you started getting into more complex arrangements. It's absolutely not necessary now, because you can just play a record over and over again. And you know the theme, so things can be more condensed.

"There were some complaints when we put out *Pleureuse* that it was only 18 minutes long," he recalls, with a dry smile, "and they were complaining about the report price, which meant more than a dollar for their music per minute. Well, that was surprising because I thought there's such an incredible degree of concentration here that you're getting so much more stuff. You can listen to it again and again and discover new things. That's one of the reasons I tended to concentrate these things, the process of making them gives me the opportunity to be somewhat complex and I'll quite often follow that tendency. I think most of the pieces in the 69/96 set are fairly robust in that you can put it on as background music and it works. And a lot of them work in terms of scrutiny, getting out the aural magnifying glasses and checking it out."

As the basis of his Nantes appearance, Oswald's *Pleureuse*-derived set might have been less than thrilling, but elsewhere, his obsession with sonic sleight of hand has inspired more compelling performance pieces. He explores areas of disassociated sound in conceptual pieces like *Pitch*, where concerts are staged in absolute darkness, providing a heightened aural experience; and *Swarm Time*, where he attempts to create the aural equivalent of a time-frozen

photograph by endlessly folding a single sound event in on itself. "One thing I'm always interested in is the capacity for illusion," Oswald admits. "The conventions of what happens on stage is something I come up against every time I get a commission to do a piece that I want to do for musicians." He has developed many pieces for performance by live ensembles, despite his avowed antipathy towards the vagaries of live performance and the "weirdness of musicians", ranging from compositions for modern dance and radio plays through some startling commissions for The Kronos Quartet. On "Spectre", for instance, the Quartet start off playing a simple one note drone that is gradually augmented by thousands of recorded multiples. "At a certain point where things have multiplied a lot, they start playing with their bows just flung off the strings until it becomes really obvious that they're not playing anymore, just swirling around in the air a bit," Oswald laughs. "It works really well when you kind of go... huh? Because it was pretty obvious at the start that they were actually playing. When I first saw it, it really felt like a dream of some kind of string performance, using this illusion. The other side of my compositional interests is time. For most of the stuff on the 69/96 box set, time is the major compositional element. Components in time, I'm always thinking about that."

Composition in real time is yet another arrow to Oswald's bow and he has a parallel career on what he terms his "hobby instrument", the alto saxophone. Despite working alongside the likes of American pianist and experimental film maker Michael Snow in the CCMC Ensemble, avant guitarists Jim O'Rourke and Henry Kaiser, John Zorn and bassist Dominic Duval, Oswald's angular, guttural throat work owes more to the British Improv tradition. On the surface, his

excursions in free improvisation seem to take the polar opposite approach to his plunderphonic activities. "It seems like that to me too," Oswald nods, "although I do think they are connected. For that sense of being inside, playing improvised music is extremely informative and influential on what happens when I'm composing. Because I'm not working in real time, I only have a normal musical experience of a piece when I'm listening back to what I've been formulating. So most of the work is done in a non-musical way, moving towards a goal of something that's going to be listenable. Being able to have a sense of three minutes of music lasting three minutes is really important to get a handle on what I'm doing in this non-real-time process. So those two very different activities influence and feed off each other."

John Oswald's claim that he's never given the copyright issue much thought can appear somewhat dangerous in light of his extensive writings on the subject. For one, he thoroughly examines the subject in an innoxe lecture delivered in 1985, called "Plunderphonics Or Audio Piracy As A Compositional Prerogative". In the lecture's text, he proposes composer James Tenney's 1961 cut and taped collage of Elvis Presley's "Blue Suede Shoes" - *Collage 1* - as a good test case for examining whether rudimentary plunderphone appropriation can stay within the bounds of legally defined copyright. "Tenney took an everyday music and allowed us to hear it differently," Oswald writes. "At the same time, all that was inherently Elvis radically influenced our perception of Jim's piece." Tenney's piece also fulfills a criterion inherent in 17th century poet John Milton's assertion that plagiarism of a work only occurs "if it is not bettered by the borrower". Oswald argues, going on to elucidate the



"ALL POPULAR MUSIC ESSENTIALLY IF NOT LEGALLY, EXISTS IN A PUBLIC DOMAIN. LISTENING TO POP MUSIC ISN'T A MATTER OF CHOICE ASKED FOR OR NOT, WE'RE BOMBARDED BY IT"

Opposite and above: plunderphonics; graph: by John Oswald

American legal concepts of 'fair use' and 'fair dealing' that provide various legally protected contexts for appropriation. Fair use covers instances where appropriations are used illustratively, critically or with intent to parody – as in Tenney's piece and much of Oswald's own work. Fair dealing ensures protection against any usage that might adversely affect the "economic viability" of the original source. The legends get a bit more personal on the subject of the vague moral rights related to copyright, which are designed to protect the "uniqueness" of the artist's soundworld, and prevent it being harmed by sloppy unofficial recordings that might hurt the artist's reputation. Oswald brings up a section of the Canadian copyright act that appears to defend Tenney's and, by extension, his own working practices. It reads: "That an artist who does not retain the copyright in a work may use certain materials used to produce that work to produce a subsequent work, without infringing copyright in the earlier work, if the subsequent work taken as a whole does not repeat the main design of the previous work." But then Oswald's lecture makes the thrilling leap from defending himself in the courtroom to proposing appropriation as a form of resistance against the noisily marketed, copyright-protected musics colonising public and private spaces. "The hit parade promenades the aural floats of pop on public display," he writes. "As curious tourists should we not be able to take our own snapshots through the crowd rather than be restricted to the official souvenir postcards and programmes? All popular music – and all folk music by definition – essentially, if not legally, exists in a public domain. Listening to pop music isn't a matter of choice. Asked for or not, we're bombarded by it. In its most insidious state, filtered to an incessant bass line, it seeps through apartment walls and out of the heads of walkpeople. Although people in general

are making more noise than ever before, fewer people are making more of the total noise, specifically, in music, those with megawatt PAs, triple platinum sales and heavy rotation. Difficult to ignore, pointlessly redundant to imitate, how does one not become a passive recipient?"

Enabling individuals to reappropriate their heavily polluted sound environment, plunderphonics effectively combats the increasingly one-way transmission of culture. In this sense, it can be seen as a restoration of folk's oral tradition, treating the sound environment as a common stock of sonic building blocks, which anyone can take and evolve new variations from, much as folk singers used to freely mine a common lode of orally passed down lines. "Still, for me that folk music thing doesn't seem to stick," Oswald argues. "The best example of the folk thing, particularly when it was on a street level, was rap music of the 70s where they were using turntables and boomboxes, and making edit tapes and metaphors and using these instruments to make fairly direct communication. They were played in public situations and there was that troubadour kind of element. That's a folk music thing but it doesn't stick in my own mind because I seem to be too much of a refuse to be part of any folk tradition.

"There's that potential in my work to deal with it but I don't think I'm the person to encourage that," he continues. "If I've advanced on any front that deals with the way the corporate situation works, then it's been totally inadvertent. I haven't taken any active stance or tried in any way to undermine it. In fact I would quite possibly wear a Nike emblem on my forehead if they paid me enough money. I feel like me being co-opted would have a happy ending. More interesting things would be produced."

Still, contemporary copyright law's ever strengthening

hold is squeezing Oswald further towards the margins. "I think we all know how the field keeps getting smaller thanks to copyright," he confesses. "I always like to refer to this piece of speculative fiction by Spider Robertson, which takes place some time in the future, where these copyright extensions I'm talking about become so extended that they go on until infinity. In this alternate reality, if somebody is the owner of something, they're always the owner of it. As a result, at some point in the future it becomes impossible to make any sort of original music, because people have exhausted those few remaining melodic configurations by using computers to search for all the combinations.

"If we don't open things up to allowing people to transform the past – as we're all inevitably doing when we do the things we do – then eventually we're going to run into a wall."

There are precedents for Oswald's stance on copyright. "I live in a different age from the one that Charles Ives did," he says, "but he's an exemplary composer in this respect, in that he never copyrighted his own work and never accepted any sort of remuneration for it. When some of his stuff got published in the late 40s, his publisher said, 'We should send you some money'. He just redirected the money to other young composers. He also lived in a time where there was no public quarry about re-use of existing music in music. He could quote contemporary popular songs freely. We can still do that freely but there's always that potential that you're going to run into some legal hassle down the road."

But perhaps composers would still be confined to scribbling for church or court patronage, if the introduction of copyright hadn't established a principle of ownership that ensured they got paid for their work.

Free market freedom might come with other restraints, but what would Oswald suggest in its place? Maybe artists should get a proper job to subsidise their art activities.

"I don't know what to replace it with," he shrugs. "It's interesting you ask that question because I've never thought about it. We should get back to what I first said. I simply love the music." A few days after our meeting, Oswald further reiterates his stance in an email update: "I had faded [which isn't normal] near the end by the time you asked for my solution to copyright," he wrote. "If I had been feeling more articulate I would have said that I don't have anything to say on the subject."

As a child, Oswald was undoubtedly precocious. By the time he was ten he had worked out how to manhandle his record deck to put it to more expressive use. "I was a bit of a manipulative DJ in the late 60s," he recalls. "I started out playing with radios before I got my first tape recorder. I was in the funny band I concocted where I was playing records at the wrong speed and I had a trumpet player, two bongo players and me. I hadn't heard of anyone using radios and record players as instruments, but we all had them. Obviously the potential was there for them to be played in all sorts of different ways." Oswald uses a beautiful quote by trumpeter and composer Jon Hassell, taken from the sleeve notes to his *Aka/Durban/Java* album (1983), to describe the sort of musical microstructures that opened up to him through experiments with vinyl, exposing "some texture like the *Mona Lisa* which, in close-up, reveals itself to be made up of tiny reproductions of the Taj Mahal". Indeed, Hassell's description of the potential of a new collage based music which would facilitate "remarkable sight-hearing excursions to a place which doesn't exist but should", uncannily anticipates Oswald's plunderphonics, where false facts mingle with real ones. For the young Oswald, vinyl records became gateways into protean soundworlds, accessible via speed shifts, juxtaposition of sounds and actual physical manipulation. He continues, "I meet a lot of people who at a young age start taking pieces of equipment apart and putting them back together again so that it turns out to do something different or at least they know how it works. My way of taking things apart was to break them, so I tended to work within the limitations of what was built into the thing. Sometimes there are options outside standard procedure in those manufactured devices, so your average turntable back in the 1960s played four speeds, in most cases with no variation, but you could play 33 rpm records at 16, 45 or 78. You would hear different things and you could also make funny sounds by moving the records. And those sounds still seem quite funny every time I hear them."

"It's quite natural," he proposes, "you have a limited number of records and you get bored with hearing them the same way each time, so you start to fiddle around with them. Of course, in retrospect, I could see that people like Stockhausen and Cage were doing this sort of thing. High Fidelity magazine tended to have interviews with people like Stockhausen and I'd find some records of that kind of stuff and guess or read about tape manipulation and start doing that kind of stuff."

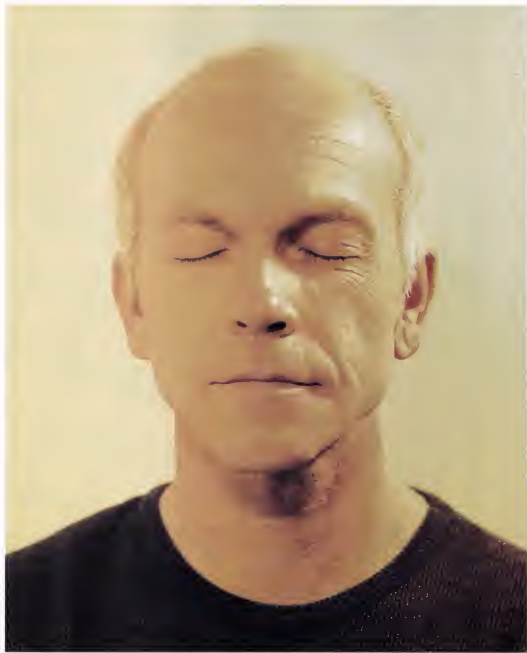
The first piece of transformative sound to blow open the young Oswald's ears was Luciano Berio's *Thema-Omnaggio A Joyce*, where the composer transformed Cathy Berberian's readings of James Joyce's *Ulysses* into rhythmic, onomatopoeic lines, whose fractured logo mirrored Joyce's own. Fittingly, however, one of Oswald's earliest appropriations was the voice of plagiarianism's high priest, William Burroughs, for a 1974 piece called *Burrows*. Its ten studies toyed with bizarre aural palindromes lifted from the *Cal Me Burroughs* album on ESP Osk. Despite an attempt to shoehorn it

into the 69/96 box as a pre-track, Burrows has yet to show up on any Oswald release. "In retrospect, I can see that we have very different ways of working," he remarks. "Burroughs's search for the random aspect of juxtaposition and cut-ups was completely contrary to my attempt to control the cut-up effect and make very careful choices as to which words go together."

Oswald's first Plunderphonic release was a vinyl EP in 1988 that featured inventions based on re-assigning Golly Parton's sex, matching Elvis with a wildly improvising backing group and mutating the orchestra of Igor Stravinsky and Count Basie. "I didn't approach the artists before I made that EP," Oswald confesses. "They might've said no, I do the work and worry about the practicalities afterwards. If they refuse me permission, I then feel that I'm obligated not to play this for anyone. But I really like playing this for people, so to ensure the maximum degree of self-preservation I wouldn't ask permission. Now I've started to think that it wasn't even a good idea or a necessary thing to ask them. There's this tendency with almost anyone who looks at a photograph of themselves to say, 'Oh, that's a terrible photo. I don't want anyone to see that', whereas everyone else has a much more moderate opinion. And I think this is why producers exist, to have somebody outside of the artist's contribution. So, as I'm the uninvited producer there isn't that dialogue going on, and in some ways I'm in the best position of just calling the shots so as to make the quality of the music a priority."

Oswald's one experience of going legit and accepting a plunderphonics commission only confirmed his preference for playing lone wolf on the edge of the herd. In 1990, Elektra opened their vaults to him in order to produce *Selektax*, the five track plunderphonic EP that features some of his most memorable work. It includes his haunting Tim Buckley chorale "Aeon", the hard-rocking Doors fantasia "O'Neil", and a hilarious MCS silying cry "Mother". "They said I could use outtakes or whatever," Oswald relates, "but it just seemed to me to be like dirty laundry and garbage. The things I like to deal with are the recordings that we know, so they didn't have to send me anything. I just went down to the store and bought a Doors CD. I didn't want or need any special access to the vaults of the record company." However, Elektra had failed to get sample clearances from the estate of Jim Morrison and others involved. The CD was swiftly withdrawn, but not before a few copies got out to DJs. A pity, because Oswald's exemplary Doors track, "O'Neil", exaggerates and intensifies the group's characteristic elements, while introducing breakneck tempo changes and grimy guitar bursts as form-destroying as anything by contemporary Japanese groups like Runo or Boredoms. Here, the plunderphonic process resurrects the Doors as unlikely avatars of everything rock should have sounded like but didn't.

"I go forth on the assumption that people will recognise something, and somewhere between them remembering and the recognition of the transformation lies a really useful musical tool," Oswald reiterates. "That doesn't immediately bring up copyright questions and all that stuff. It is quotation and I've made extra effort to make the quotations clear on the box set. And as for the anagrams, they take a little deciphering but people are named." When its morphed hybrid popstar images and deft anagram credits, such as Game Conc Cannon and Sir Jim Moron, get banned under copyright and legal issues, it's easy to forget that Oswald's plunderphonics can be side-splittingly funny. "So I've heard," he smirks, disappearing through the door "So I've heard." : 69/96 is available from www.negativeplanet.com. John Oswald plays in London with CCMC in June, see Out There for details.



The Primer

The Wire's bimonthly guide to the essential recordings of a selected artist or genre. This month: Richard Henderson travels back in time to unearth archive recordings of hillbillies, folk blues, yodellers, fiddlers and other long-dead denizens of a vanished past that's been dubbed the Old, Weird America. Illustration: Savage Pencil

Botanist Luther Burbank's remark about the merits of hybridisation, that it "made the world go forward", applied in equal measure to the folk music made by black and white emigrants to the United States. Forget democracy and religious tolerance, where America really marked its difference from the Old World was in its syncretic culture. Of course, while the American Dream promised unrestrained liberty for "poor, tired, huddled masses yearning to breathe free" living together in a gorgeous mosaic, the greatest flourishing of American culture was born of bondage. During the country's first century, the work songs and African rhythms of slaves met European hymnody, then fashionable dances and art song, instruments and half-remembered traditions whose origins lay in any one of a dozen countries were grouped together in strange and original ensembles. Black performers in black face imitating white performers caricaturing black performers became commonplace in late 19th century minstrelsy. The American landscape allowed for such cultural promiscuity, with new genres of folk and traditional music born seemingly by the day.

The Rosetta Stone that enabled subsequent generations to rediscover and decode music from America's disappearing countryside first appeared in 1952. Released by roots music enthusiast Moses Asch on his Folkways label, the *Anthology of American Folk Music* was assembled from the forgotten 78rpm discs collected by film maker and ethnographer Harry Smith (see *The Wire* 198). The sumptuously packaged 1997 CD reissue included an essay by Greil Marcus, entitled "The Old, Weird America". Its title referred to Smith's configuring the 84 tracks in his "repertory of the past" – blues, gospel, parlor tunes, rural music of all stripes – in such a way as to pull the skin off early 50s America. At a time of political witch hunts and an arch-conformist culture, these songs were artefacts of a sub-rosa America, quaxotic in the extreme yet still recognisable.

Folk musicians of the 60s and beyond drew from the songs found on the *Anthology*, but ultimately these records enabled an x-ray view into the viscera of American traditional music. There, critical (even splinter) can be observed in media res, as a country's music came to terms both with its multiracial constituency and the reverberating impact of newly available sound recordings. A country in which strains of African chant and dance came to America by slaves entwined with Elizabethan ballads and the liturgy of syncretic New World religions like the Spiritual Baptist church, or voodoo. In this hothouse atmosphere, there was no predicting which combinations would flourish or die; what could be construed as outright parody, as with the case of yodelling cowboy singers, might seize the popular imagination. Other styles lived on in rustic backwaters, sung and played only in a few square miles of Southern hill country. Ancient English ballads

and dialect speech, crossbred with African banjo tunings, were preserved like flies in amber. Yet string bands from the same areas, having thought up novel applications for European instruments, multiplied and spread with viral efficiency.

Inspired by the *Anthology*, others have scrutinised the early days of American music through the lens of photography. Combinations of "old time" music appeared in its wake numbering in the hundreds, if not the thousands, most mining the same artistic turf to good effect. Beginning with an additional, posthumously realised volume of Smith's collection, the following survey examines other portraits of cultural miscegenation, compilations that successfully tap into the collective memory. Each, in its way, invokes the disparate ingredients that brought piquancy, bite and lasting flavour to the stew that was American folk music in its formative years.

VARIOUS HARRY SMITH'S ANTHOLOGY OF AFRO-AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC VOLUME FOUR REVENANT T11 2020 • BOOK

Harry Smith prepared – and subsequently lost interest in – notes and tapes outlining a fourth volume of his *Anthology*. These materials resurfaced nearly a half-century later and were delivered to the *Revenant* label by Ravi Singh of the Harry Smith Archives.

A subtext in the design of the original *Anthology* was a colour scheme inspired by Smith's occult preoccupations. Keyed to the overarching themes of the first three volumes ("Ballads," "Social Music" and "Songs") were their elemental red, blue and green (fire, water and air) covers. The fourth was to have been yellow (earth). The black cover for *Revenant*'s special edition of *Volume Four* seems more in keeping with the mostly dark contents of these two discs. As the late John Fahey, a guiding light behind *Revenant*'s reissue, observed, "An examination of the lyrical content in *Volume 4*, however, reveals a great deal of despair, realism, disappointment and cynicism... Alienation. That is what *Volume 4*... is about."

Alternating between blues and Cagan dances, gospel and proto-bluesgrass, the songs Smith chose grappled the Depression-era national psyche in the wake of Black Tuesday. The morbidity index runs high throughout these rescued 78rpm recordings ("Southern Casey Jones", "Wreck Of The Tennessee Grave Train"). Even Smith's favourites The Carter Family sing "No Depression In Heaven" with tremulous uncertainty. (Though Sara and AP Carter divorced after their first recordings in the 30s, their marriage bill as "family" remained for two decades more.) Here also are The Carters' "Black Jack David", crucial source code for 20th century C&W, with its roots in ancient English ballads. A fragment of the same "Child ballad, the OMA presented for evidence, opens Van Dyke Parks's

Song Cycle.

Both magpie and polymath in equal parts, Harry Smith obsessively collected objects of all sorts; his biography, *American Magus*, bears the subtitle: "With A Partial List Of Things He Gathered". The fourth volume of the *Anthology* pays homage to the packrat in Smith with lists of related songs appended to the notes for each selection. The notes for Memphis Minnie's 1935 ode to boxer Joe Louis, "He's In The Ring (Doing The Same Old Thing)", catalogue a dozen other blues and calypso sides cut in honour of the fighter, a barometer of collective pride felt throughout the African-American Diaspora.

VARIOUS AFRO-AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC FROM TATE AND PANOLA COUNTIES, MISSISSIPPI ROUNDER 103641615 CD FOLK MUSIC FROM WISCONSIN ROUNDER 886641591 CD

Like so many core samples extracted from the South's musical landscape, Afro-American Folk Music From Tate And Panola Counties, Mississippi unearths sounds still current in the hill country west of the Mississippi Delta. Though Smith's *Anthology* drew from existing recordings, none of the music made in this area attracted record company attention until the 60s (RL Burnside and Junior Kimbrough are among latter day artists from the area released on Fat Possum and other 'alt.blues' labels). Two generations of ethnographers made the recordings collated on *Afro-American Folk Music*; Alan Lomax made a recording trip in 1942, followed by David Evans in 1969-71. Despite the time interval, things remained little changed: file and drum music played at picnics, adding syncopation to the martial beats drummed by black parade groups during the Civil War; solo performers imitating file and drums by whistling as they beat polymorphs on a washbasin; 19th century black social airs performed on tenorite quilts (parapets); and the "diddle bow", a one-stringed slide guitar nailed onto the wall of a house, a snuff bottle for its resonating cavity. More conventional six-stringed slide guitars are included, as are the banjos and fiddles one might expect to find here, though it is noted that banjo playing is a nonbrand tradition in the area, with only one or two players remaining.

Despite indigenous ballads being composed in several different languages, *Folk Music From Wisconsin* concentrates on English-speaking emigrants to the northern state of Wisconsin. Although at first glance words removed, ethnically and geographically, from Afro-American Folk Music..., this is another collection earmarked by musical reminders of the Old World. "Anse, Anse, You Crowsy Sleeper" arrived here from the British Isles having first passed through the South, as was the case with "Once I Courted A



The Primer

Charming Beauty Bright", the latter brought to the area by Kentuckian lumberjacks migrating to work in Wisconsin forests in the 1890s. Another staple of the 60s folk boom, the epic "Brennan On The Moor", is sung in a 1946 recording, undoubtedly much closer to the song's Irish origins. Homemade instruments feature here as well. If "The Pinery Boy," adapted from an English song of love lost at sea, wasn't sufficiently poignant, Mrs Otis Rindelsbacher's recital on "Wing cello" (descended from the ingenuity that first coupled a crackerbox with a pitchfork in lumber camps) plumbs new depths in the slough of despond.

VARIOUS

PRAYERS FROM HELL: WHITE GOSPEL & SINNERS BLUES 1927-1940

TRACON LCA270 CD

AMERICAN PRIMITIVE VOL 1: PRE-WAR GOSPEL

REVENANT 306 CD

Prayers From Hell... is a checklist of string bands (Byron Parker & His Mountaineers, The Dixon Brothers) and white blues artists (Frank Hutchison) who felt the push and pull of a "hillbilly" career in music versus sacred obligations. Dock Boggs experienced this opposition more deeply than most. His career trajectory saw him forsake cool mining for notoriety as a boppy player of freshie talent and a singer of scalding intensity. During the first wave of enthusiasm for his music, Boggs quit his career in 1930 at his wife's insistence that he was being led down the wrong path. Interest in his work was stymied by the inclusion of tracks such as "Sugar Baby" and "Country Blues" on Smith's Anthology; these and others (included here as well) led to Boggs's return to performing three decades later, a welcomed presence at 60s folk festivals.

Homebased musical physicists, The Monroe Brothers accelerated the quantum particles of the shape note hymns and square dance music on which they were raised. Bluesness was the eventual result of their high-speed renditions of religious ("I Am Ready To Go") and secular material, though none of Bill Monroe's later solo work would touch the ferocious verve of tracks such as these.

Inspired by the sales generated by recorded sermons in the 20s, record companies such as Paramount and Brunswick began releasing gospel sides by their blues artists (often using pseudonyms). The Reverent Label's *American Primitive Vol 1: Pre-War Gospel* tracks this phenomenon. Charley Patton, under his own name and as Elder JJ Hadley, offers bottleneck guitar odds to finicity ("I'll Believe I'll Go Back Home", "Prayer Of Death"). Eddie Head's "Down On Me", belted home by a rag-tag family ensemble, would much later become a signature in song for Javis Joplin. Blind Lemon Jefferson's success with early street gospel led to blind singers being encouraged to record holy themes. Blind Willie Davis, Blind Joe Taggart, Blind Mamie Forehand and Blind Roosevelt Graves each cranked out her "religious records", gathered here, with Graves's rhythmic picking on National steel guitar constituting an invention in its time.

VARIOUS

THE CORNSHUSKER'S FROLIC VOLS 1 & 2

YAZOO 2045/2046 CD

"Dowhome Music and Entertainment from the American Countryside". Many of the recordings compiled in these two volumes draw a straight line leading from bandanicos to the Grand Ole Opry. They also promulgated the image of "hillbilly" performers, identified with the high country of the Deep South (Stoneman's Blue Ridge Cornshuckers, Gelaway's

West Virginia Mountaineers). Interspersed are rags, breakdowns and novelty tunes by black performers such as the Boogie Street Sheiks, Cannon's Jug Stompers, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Henry Thomas, the latter's work reflecting the "racially non-descript approach to rural music of the 19th century."

Ongoing banter - with an often weirdly scripted feed-over these lively frolics allowed for lengthy intros and an episodic feel to many of the performances, the song stopping and resuming with a different reel or jig. Combined with microphone placement that smelted large hall acoustics, the band members talking trash among themselves contributed to these early simulations of live performances. (The often surreal, nonsequitur speech, paired with exuberant playing, resembled the soundtrack for a Fischer Bros cartoon. Crockett's Kentucky Mountaineers actually did background music for animations by Walter "Woody Woodpecker" Lantz.)

As with the Anthology, these Yazoo releases rescue performances from crumbly 78rpm discs (which in many cases were of only extant copies, as with Seven Foot Dilly & His Dill Pickens' "Sand Mountain Drag") via archival restoration performed with sensitivity by label head Richard Nevins

VARIOUS

FOLKS, HE SURE DO PULL SOME BOW! VINTAGE FIDDLE MUSIC 1927-1935

OLD HAT 1003 CD

VIOLIN SING THE BLUES FOR ME: AFRICAN AMERICAN FIDDLERS 1926-1949

OLD HAT 1002 CD

Distinctions between folk traditions and popular culture were hazy in Harry Smith's selections for his Anthology. If anything, this pointed out new aspects of music in the age of mechanical reproduction. Styles of folk music that might have evanesced within a few months became fixed in the collective imagination when preserved by recordings, and what might have remained regional soon enough became a nationwide fad. By retooling the blues, WC Handy was responsible for popularizing a form that might not otherwise have escaped the Southeastern US. His conversion to the blues was occasioned by a "primitive" opening act out-earched Handy's orchestra on the strength of coins pitched by the audience. Sleazebag in turn of the century Britain, at all in vogue on the Continent, Handy's decision to add violin to his Memphis based blues ensemble was born of enthusiasm for these imported trends and nostalgia for country frolics he had performed at with older relatives while growing up in Alabama.

Handy's orchestra served as a farm team for many musicians, such as fiddler Charles Pierce, whose Memphis Jug Band opens *Folks, He Sure Do Pull Some Bow!* with the programatically titled "Rukus Juice And Chillin'". The track is among Pierce's final recordings, cut for the Okeh label, and as such part of a recorded legacy that is frustratingly small for such an eclectic stylist. Another violinist, emerging European rhythms with American rural melodies was Augustus Ahlu, a mysterious figure thought to have arrived in New England from Cape Verde. A novel addition to string band instrumentation, the 12-string Portuguese viola, crossed the Atlantic with him, and had a distinctive timbre heard on "Cabo Verdano's Peque Nove", cut with his group, Abreu's Portuguese Instrumental Trio. Part Deep South, part Hot Club Of Paris, Abreu's fiddling features octave jumps and ornamentation worthy of a Tom Verlaine guitar solo.

Placing the black violin tradition at closer proximity to its origins in the era of slavery, *Violin Sing The Blues*

For Me oscillates between refinement and hillbilly brassiness. New Orleans jazz groups (slaves were sent to the Crescent City to learn violin prior to emancipation) and jug bands rub shoulders in the eclectic track selection. "Peg Leg" Howell & His Gang, represented by "Beaver Side Rag" featured fiddler Eddie Anthony, whose intonation was somewhat impressionistic, though more than compensated by a spiky attack and flights of imagination prefiguring Sid Page's violin work for Dan Hicks. Anthony is also heard in duet recordings for Columbia; when he died in 1934, Howell withdrew from performing.

The album wraps with "Ted's Stamp", a duet between Ted Bogan and Louie Blue (aka Howard Armstrong). The subject of Crumb director Terry Zwigoff's documentary *Louie Blue*, Armstrong's career stretched from the era of minstrel shows and ragtime, when he played in his family's group, to developments in blues and jazz. His participation in the Tennessee Chocolate Drops is chronicled on *Violin Sing...* as well. "Vine Street Drag" gave Armstrong room to luxuriate in unusual modulations and alternating staccato and legato passages. In a turn of events that would be repeated often in subsequent years, the record was sufficiently popular that the Vocation label issued it not only as a "race" record, but in their mainstream series (where the group's name was pasteurized as "The Tennessee Trio").

VARIOUS

HIGH ATMOSPHERE

ROUNDNER 0038 CD

OLD-TIME MUSIC FROM SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

COUNTRY 3333 CD

For several years, much of what was known of Harry Smith was revealed in an interview conducted by John Cohen for the folk music magazine *Sing Out!* (A facsimile reprint appears in *American Music*; the uncredited text is found in *Think Of The Self Speaking: Harry Smith - Selected Interviews*). Cohen was a member of The New Lost City Ramblers, a folk group in Manhattan's early 60s Bleeker Street scene much inspired by the Anthology's contents. A photographer and ethnographer in addition to being a performer, Cohen travelled through Virginia and North Carolina in 1965, with the ostensible academic mission of documenting various five-string banjo tunings. Cohen soon realized that, by asking questions in the course of his fact-finding expedition, the cap had been pried loose from a deep well of musical memories. A host of small town players opened up to Cohen's tape recorder, and more than the minutiae of intonation, he came away from his pilgrimage with a wealth of anecdotes and rarely sung ballads. Cohen was also inspired by the collections of mountain music made during the 30s by John and Alan Lomax; as with the Lomax tapes, Cohen himself is very much present on his own recordings, cooing his subjects into recalling old melodies and the circumstances that inspired them.

Of course, timing is everything, and Cohen seemed to have this on his side throughout. Frank Proffit, of Watauga, North Carolina, was an ideal subject: his homemade fretless banjo playing spun like a Catherine wheel, in contrast to his low-pitched, bluesy vocals. His banjo stylings had palpable Isaac shades, with melismas possible only on his instrument in addition to repertoire learned from black neighbors. Proffit sang "Saturn, Your Kingdom Must Come Down" into Cohen's Nagra recorder, then died a few days later. Much as Congolese guitar parts are often adapted from thumb piano melodies, the influence of preexisting fiddle tunes on banjo renditions of standards like "Cumberland Gap" is easily heard.



The Primer

Some of Loma's subjects were sought out by Cohen; the fiddler Wade Ward, of independent, Virginia, recreates and (on the spot) renounces tunes once played for Loma (assisted by a young tape operator Pete Seeger). High Atmosphere went out of print for two decades after its 1974 release; like Smith's *Anthology*, this equally essential compilation earned a welcome reissue in the 90s.

The County label is an invaluable resource for those interested in musical Americana. *Old Time Music From Southwest Virginia* taps into a hotbed of preservationist musicians, including the nightly much-anthologized Dock Boggs. The sides cut by Boggs are also included on *Reverend's Boggs* monograph *Country Blues*. On the County disc, his work is framed in the context of his contemporaries, whose talent existed in sufficient abundance to convince the Virginia Chamber of Commerce that Old Time music might lure tourists to the area. Among the local luminaries heard in Boggs's company are The Magic City Trio, who toured Virginia's coal camps with Boggs; the group's fiddler, one John Dykes, hated the recording process and stopped after traveling to New York to cut 12 sides. His incendiary bowing, as heard on two takes of "Callahan's Reel", inspires much regret that Dykes didn't enjoy studio work. Emory Arthur's "Reuben, Oh! Reuben" is testament to the worth of one more mysterious virtuoso. He was the first to record "I Am A Man of Constant Sorrow", its melody a highlight of O Brother. Where Art Thou?, the Coen Brothers' recent cinematic paean to the style, if not the substance, of Smith's *Anthology*.

VARIOUS AMERICAN YODELING 1911-1946 TRIONT US6248 CD

A component of American minstrel shows from the 1830s onward, yodeling is intrinsic to singing in Appalachia and Eastern Europe as well as its traditional association with Alpine song. In America, though, the technique was clearly imported and, characteristically, was first integrated into indigenous music by black entertainers. Yodeling records caught on in the first two decades of the 20th century. Several of these (properly cylinders rather than records, as cut for the Edison company) referenced Swiss and German themes and were sung by an early white yodeler, George P. Watson, who would later record for Columbia and Victor. His lullaby "Sleep, Baby, Sleep" is the final track (and the earliest recording, from 1911) on a wide-ranging collection surveying the "yodeling fever" which gripped American record buyers in the years prior to the Second World War.

Issued by the German Triont label, *American Yodeling 1911-1946* blends successful commercial releases with those cut by artists whose yodels were heard by a relative few. The style was associated with Country records, specifically those sung by cowboy characters like Roy Rogers ("Cowboy Herd Night Song") and Sons of the Pioneers ("The Devil's Great Grandson"), irrespective of the yodeling cowboy actually being "one of the mightiest pop hallucinations of all time" according to Nick Tosches, in his illuminating history, *Country: The Singing Brakeman*. Jimmie Rodgers, was famed above all Country blue yodelers, imitated by black and white musicians alike; his "Standin' On The Corner (Blue Yodel No. 9)" is here, as is the work of a Rodgers clone, Cliff Carlisle ("The Yodeling Hobo"), who extolled his own unsavory men with "The Nasty Swing". There may have been something in his declaration, as Carlisle was later covered by Elvis Presley. The "soft, precise" harmonies of The Delmore Brothers were inspired also by Jimmie

Rodgers. A quarter century later, The Everly Brothers would run to the bank with their sound.

VARIOUS CLOSE TO HOME: OLD-TIME MUSIC FROM MIKE SEEGER'S COLLECTION SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS 40017 CD MOUNTAIN MUSIC OF KENTUCKY SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS 40077 CD

From the label that reissued Smith's *Anthology* comes this pair of traditional Southern compilations. *Close To Home...* is a selection of recordings made by musician/collector Mike Seeger in the 50s and 60s. Viewed in context of the other collections in this survey, Seeger's field work would appear compromised at first glance by the relatively recent date of his taping. Still, he had the good sense to tap into a network of collector/performers located in points all through the American South. Some of these, like Elizabeth Cotten, were first introduced to Seeger at the home of his musician parents, where Cotten worked Elsewhere, whether in rural South Carolina or Georgia's swampland, Seeger took his banjo along with his taping gear, the former providing an entree to rebent local musicians.

His compilation is lengthy, of extensive sweep and not a little exhausting. No sooner does one grow comfortable with several selections performed on harmonica by Vernon Supton in late 50s Maryland, than the hypnotic autoharp strums of Kirby Snow is introduced. Immediately after that, the union singing of Ernest and Hattie Stoneman, their rough-hewn version of "Gather In The Golden Grain" effectively freezing time for its brief duration. Then more autumns, solo vocalists, the stellar fiddle of Wade Ward and on and on. More than three dozen selections are carefully selected, with most enticing listeners to seek out *Folkways* albums devoted to a given artist (though the majority of these tracks are unique to *Close To Home*).

The two discs comprising *Mountain Music Of Kentucky* are yet another product of New Lost City Ramblers John Cohen's investigations. In 1959, when these takes were made, Kentucky music still possessed a vigour that resisted the predations of mass media. Eight songs are performed by Roscoe Holcomb, whose feral howl validates his memory of playing "for square dances till the sweat dripped off my elbows". Recording at the end of a day's work in construction, Holcomb threatens the integrity of the microphone's diaphragm with his powerful delivery; his guitar tuned like a banjo, as was done by slaves in the previous century.

The recordings were made in "living rooms, front porches, dance halls and churches... and isolated houses of the rural valleys outback of Hazard, Kentucky". Generally, it was enough for Cohen to simply hear that someone knew and/or performed old songs to justify the trek to find them. His luck obviously ran high that year, as he found Manon Sumner, whose stint as a Nashville musician had not blunted the raw edge of the old hillbilly tunes he recorded for Cohen. As these recordings were relatively modern, the phonograph had become an important source of repertoire, even more so than oral transmission and the recordist often encountered players who were holding out better material for "remunerative purposes". When this album first appeared in 1960, it did lead some of its subjects on to other recording opportunities (Gravis Davis, who claimed to have written the Merle Travis hit "Satan Tons", went on to record for Folkways.) Its reissue is also of significance on a par with *Anthology Of American Folk Music*, as obviously it, too, "changed America with music".

VARIOUS FOLKSONGS OF THE LOUISIANA ACADIANS ARHOLITE 358 CD

AMEDE ARDOIN "I'M NEVER COMIN' BACK": PIONEER OF LOUISIANA FRENCH BLUES 1930-34 ARHOLITE 3007 CD

Standing shoulder to shoulder with Folkways' Moses Asch as a conservator of American roots music is German emigre Chns Strachwitz, the founder and producer of Northern Californian label Arhoolite Records. Among the label's doyens of Cajun and Zydeco releases, Strachwitz's reissue of field recordings made by Or Harry Oster in late 50s Louisiana enables a sweeping overview of Louisiana's indigenous dance music that's unlike any other audio survey. The cuts are divided into those influenced by "The 19th Century and After", "The 18th Century and Earlier" and "More Cajun Music from Grand Mamou". A brilliant example of the second variety is the "Confédération Française" played on harmonica by Isom J. Fontenot; spinning like a top, Fontenot's electric (though not electrified) presence is felt all through this disc. Accordeons, fiddles and guitars lead dancers through the gaited thump of "Grand Texas" and the adapted voodoo dance "Colinda", its erotic subtext underscored by the jazz-tinted synopses of Wallace "Cheese" Reed.

Harry Smith chose to end the final volume of his *Anthology* with Cajun music, possibly, as John Fahy speculated, in sympathy with Acadian French farmers who refused to move to cities, Anglicise their lives and forsake their religion. Bowing to this wisdom, this survey concludes with one of the kings of Cajun music, Amédé Ardoin. Surely no one was more likely to become the lodestar of Cajun music than this Creole-French-American, whose full-time profession to the German diatonic accordion galvanised dancehall audiences along the Gulf Coast. Ardoin recorded 34 sides between 1929-34, a watershed era in Louisiana music when enthusiasm for older dances of European origin (*mazurka, valse en deux temps*) was transforming to one-steps, waltzes and recently popular blues tunes. Ardoin was as effective a synthesist as has existed in American folk culture; his music recycled older melodies and lyric motives, yet owing to a rambunctious delivery his music was perceived as new. Shrieks of passion and regret inform Ardoin's singing; his voice was a brusque, punchy instrument that could assert itself in a crowded saloon without amplification. He would bounce from one end of the accordion's keyboard to the other, spraying dense syncope even as he explored time and again, "What will I do, baby?"

Once again, American traditional music coughs up a quicksilver talent destined to die young and leave an output whose influence is out of all proportion to its meagre running time. The nervy, shiftless and girl-crazy Ardoin made enough enemies to earn a beating that landed him in a Louisiana asylum prior to an early demise. With 26 tracks, the lion's share of his recordings — cut at seasons in New Orleans, San Antonio and New York — are brought together on "I'm Never Comin' Back". His jumpzy accordion style, laced with numerous *Acadianisms* of which the blues were only the most recent, took root as the rock music of its day. Moreover, his charisma and catholic enthusiasms drew the blueprint for today's Zydeco and Cajun. His lasting sound was imbued with the hardness common in the best of early American folk tradition. One more rugged hybrid, parented by disparate races and cultures who became uneasy bedfellows in the strange New World.

The Primer



Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Charged up: EP-P's iPod (see invisible Action, page 30)

Springback 15

Jon Hassell
World Equinox (Lovely Music)
Macgregor
Inches Of Spring (CBB)
Pat Wang
The Little Bird Of Spring (Shenachee)
Alice Coltrane
From Rise Of Spring, Spring Rounds (Warner Bros)
Don Dadi
The Book Of Timespace, Spring (Sire)
The Dunes Of Boca-Rox
New: The Fold-down Spring (Columbia)
André Kertész
Manga: Sea Of The Spring (Columbia)
Yoo Su-Yong
Second Wind In Spring (Normal)
Peter Nero & Marty Gold
Spring Is Here (RCA)
Bill Evans
You Must Believe In Spring (Warner Bros)
Agnès March
Garden Of April (Real Gone)
Dmitry Bortnitsky
Springtime (Piano: Spring Press)
Dylan Casper
Lovely Spring (All Saints)
Luc Ferrari
Delite Springlike Intuitive Pear Un Paysage De Printemps (Babel)
Low Hamboe
May Rain (Now Albany)

Circus Maximus 15

Various
The Curious Case Of Minsk (Expanding Records)
Herrmann & Kiese
Our Name (Mer Music)
Mam
Finally We Are No One (Fat Cat)
Purple Confusion
Sound Of The Atom Spinning (Gazon)
Plus Racines
Remains (Hells)
Metamorphosis
High Line And Dirty (Mogul Tenset)
Pom Pom
#1, #2 & #3 (Pom Pom)
Various
Lacrimosa (Lac)
Darius Rajas
Northern Classics (Korede Kaki)
Marquis Mander
Solopistic Motion (Domest)
Beige
I'm Only In It For The Money (Alka)
Replicant Rumba Rockers
A Rhythmic Interlocking Mo (Nongiac)
Frederik Schikowski
Tia Nani (Berling)
Figures
The Hooray (Mondia Enterprises)
Coma
We Are The Pervert? (Nickel Records)

Rock Action 15

The Heads
Under Solid (Sweet Nothing)
Sainted Brothers
Sneak Your Soul And Dare Your Spirit To Move (Ecstacy)
Von Borkes
Lack Of Communication (Sweet Nothing)
The Scarus Line
More (Sweet Nothing)
D4
Efficiency (Flying Hunt)
Spirit Sound Group Direct Action Committee
The Party Ruffians (Exhaust)
Gallon Drunk
Fun Music (Sweet Nothing)
Fucking Champs
V (Drug City)
Daken Of Nothing
Sweet Action 7" (Bleeker's Hook)
Your Enemies Friends
Whisper EP (Buddhead)
Sore's Soreness
Sweet Nothing (Mack Aborn)
Lord High Fiers
The Beginning Of The End (In The Red)
Bathhouse Sufferers
Harpy Dumpty (LSD) (Sutro Bigger Veil)
Wine
Blood & Barn EP (Pink Pig)
Mono
Under The Pail Tree (Tacks)

Office Ambience

Rico
Tales 2001 (Maid)
Information
Borekino (Rune Grammofon)
Electricians
I Want To Be The President EP Let's Rock!
Matmos/7 Lenses
Drug Opera (Rogue Terrain)
Anders
Vista Bell (Tegrethall)
Alice Coltrane
Universal Consciousness (Impulse/Universal Jazz)
The Heads
Under Solid (Sweet Nothing)
Heron Possessor
Parabolics (Sub Rosa)
Various
Dance Hall Disco 2 (Sire)
Hierro with John Tiberry
The Hands Of Cinematography (Entwistle)
Philo Jack
Sister (Toucan)
Rock & Motherlucker
U Sound (Vol. 1 & 2) (Sound)
The Velvet Underground & Nico
Deluxe Edition (Universal)
Savage Republic
Savage Republic (Universal) (Jemshere) (Customs)
(Mellotron Recordings)

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Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, producers, etc. Email: charts@bwire.co.uk

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Pinski Zoo/Blurt

London, UK

New York: New Sounds, New Spaces

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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles

ANTIBALAS

TALKATIF

NINJA TUNE ZEN 66 CD

BY PETER SHAPIRO

Whether it's about cultural poverty, post-historical "false consciousness," pre-parallelism, shifting patterns, generational identity angst or they just don't make 'em like they used to be of the times, the matter of the matter is just about everything in contemporary music that feels "progressive" isn't much more than a single thread.

The one you can, or maybe the worst offenders (depending on your view) are the "is it live or is it Member?" Antibalás group Antibalas. If you were being unkind, Antibalas are merely a Fela tribute outfit that should be opening for The Baddest Beasts or Bjorn Again. On the other hand, they are part of a huge group of musicians reacting against industry sterility, digital purity and the blandness of consensus politics by recreating music born of experimentation, miscegenation and commitment. Your take on it will no doubt depend on your own commitment to the modernist project. Talkatíf, the group's second album for Ninja Tune, is even more Fela & Tom Green's OD than their previous *Liberation Afrobeat Vol. 1*.

With the exception of some prominent Latin jazz influences on "MESA 15," Martin Perna's crew have gone beyond merely mimicking Fela's grooves to fully inhabiting it. This isn't so much carbon copy as Photostop Afrobeat—the only giveaway is that the saxos are in tune. But verisimilitude isn't the point. Groove is, and when the groove is as hot as Talkatíf, who cares about anything else?

DEREK BAILEY
NEW SIGHTS, OLD SOUNDS:
SOLO LIVE

GRUB 425 CD

**DEREK BAILEY &
MIN XIAO-FEN**
FLYING DRAGONS

GRUB 425 CD

**BAILEY/TURNER/KYTASTY/
WILKINSON**
DUOS, LONDON 2001

GRUB 51 CD

**FRANZ HAUZINGER &
DEREK BAILEY**
FRANZ HAUZINGER &
DEREK BAILEY

GRUB 425 CD

DEREK BAILEY
BALLADS

IZADIK 72709 CD

BY JULIAN COMLEY

As *Sin Senius As Your Life*, Val Wilmer described Derek Bailey as a "brilliant" guitarist and quoted saxophonist Anthony Braxton's observation that he is one of those musicians who "are creative to the degree where you have to enter their own reality. They've defined the thing already." Bailey made no compromises in dwelling on idiosyncrasy and self-regulating music. Maybe that's why his achievement was

recognised early on by fellow players and astute listeners. He remains unmistakable and irresistible, preserving the freedom to do what he dees, and he has created a substantial and loyal audience for his boldly unconventional playing. A Bailey performance will invariably deliver new familiar elements: ringing harmonics, dry and dampened chords, surges of swell, scurrying, inconclusive riffs, discordant collisions, bent and truncated notes, deft permutations and startling transitions. And, invariably sounding somehow unfamiliar, it will become a peculiar fascination.

During spring 1978 Bailey was in Japan, playing with musicians like bassist Motoharu Yoshizumi, trumpeter Toshiron Kondo and alto saxophonist Karyu Aka, as documented on the album, *Duo & Trio Improvisations*, issued on CD by DIW in 1992. He also recorded the long unavailable, Japan-only solo set, *New Sights, Old Sounds*. However, the master tapes have since been retrieved and appear now with a dedication to their producer and restless free music champion Aquna Aka, who died soon after the initial release. The first disc contains six studio recordings; the second three improvisations in concert. In both cases Bailey is in great form. The solos, on acoustic and electric instruments, are concentrated and respectful, evolving with a structural clarity that really does invite the term spontaneous composition. Feedback devotees will relish the second track on the live set.

Whatever effect Japanese environments and encounters had on the specific character of Bailey's playing, it's always fascinating to hear how the autonomy of a unique soloist is modified by interaction with other performers. Bailey has been highly adventurous in his musical fissions. Braxton's observation has appeared to hold true in some instances, where collaborators have been drawn squarely into Bailey's musical cosmos. In other cases, he has shown a high level of responsiveness and adaptability, without muddying his self-identification.

Min Xiao-Fen plays the pipa, a Chinese lute. Flying Dragons, recorded in concert in New York in 1999, is her second album with Bailey. Like its predecessor, *Viper*, it testifies to a high degree of compatibility between them. Beyond basic familial resemblance, their instruments share a soundworld; they overlap yet remain distinct, and can tussle as well as blend. Xiao-Fen is rapid and sure. She's an attacking player, energetically soot, using suppleness to steer or deflect. Bailey is at his most pliant and accommodating, observing balance, engaging with intimacy. Together they execute superb *flageur work*.

Quix, Loade's 2001 was recorded at three venues with three disparate instrumentalists. A 30-minute interchange at the Film Flam Club pairs Bailey's electric guitar with Alan Wilkinson's brassy hornline. See the latter's wild swinger occupies the foreground, prodding and baying across the instrument's register. Bailey shades him closely, content to accumbate and punctuate. It's not a slugging match—more a

flexing and loosening of limber muscles. The second cut, recorded at the October Gallery, features percussionist Roger Turner, who marks out a field of energized events, with buzzing connections along lines of athletic performance and subtle responsiveness. Again playing electric, Bailey is obviously at home in this charged arena, where he enters into a flowing and animated exchange. The concluding track is a refined dialogue between Bailey on acoustic guitar and Julian Kyrtast on the ancient Ukrainian stringed instrument called the bandura, a kind of hybrid lute and zither. In the resonant acoustics of St Michael & All Angels Church, the bandura sounds delicate and sweet. Kyrtast also blows a wooden flute. Bailey adapts and shows himself responsive to fragility as well as to brawn and energy.

In some ways the most exciting of these albums is the meeting with extraordinary quartet trumpeter Franz Hauzinger. Bailey, an electric guitar, seems to be positioned more precariously, unsure quite what to expect from the Viennese musician. But he's clearly inspired. Hauzinger has unequivocally created his own musical domain: bristly, bubbling, slipping, searing and booming, suggesting bronchial, arterial or intestinal flows and pulses, but also recalling the tremors of electronic music. Occasionally Bailey pauses to just listen. Mostly he listens and probes points of correspondence, or works with a contrasting language, finding ways to act and react. He may have "defined the thing already," but there's still a score of discovery in Bailey's approach.

That yen for discovery also holds on Ballads, where he engages with jazz standards such as David Rakoff's "Tuxedo" and John Green's "Body And Soul." "It was Zorn's idea," Bailey told Marc Ribot, who contributes sleeveless. Who but John Zorn could have persuaded this most unromantic musician to tackle a set of ballroom territory? He strides onto Joe Pass territory and stamps his mark unforgettably onto each of the 14 ballads, an extraordinary fusion of jazz and free playing, it's self-binding to hear him work out highly personal moves from within the chord progression of Victor Young's "Stella By Starlight." Sometimes, as on Hoagy Carmichael's "Rocking Chair," there's a touch of the ecclesiastic, wrestling his way out of a straitjacket. But, crucially, Bailey shows respect for the material. As he tells Ribot, "I'm not interested in Improvised Music with a capital I and a capital M. I'm interested in improving." As ever, his improving dialogues indifference, and that's invaluable.

**CAPTAIN BEEFHEART &
THE MAGIC BAND**
DUST SUCKER

WILKINSON 51000 CD

BY COMPOUNCE

The full story of Captain Beefheart's ill-fated Bad Chain Puler—potentially his greatest musical statement after *Trout Mask Replica*—has already been admirably documented in Mike

Baines's biography. Scheduled for release in 1977 on Ode Records, the label owned by his producer Frank Zappa and Zappa's former manager Herb Cohen, the album was shelved when DoCoet was shut down by its partners' legal wrangles. Although some tracks were later revised for *Shiny Bae* (Bad Chain Puler), the original tapes are held by Zappa's estate and remain unreleased. In the meantime, the album's UK licensees Virgin Records had already been supplying Bad Chain Puler promo cassettes to the music press. Much to Beefheart's dismay, booting copies began to circulate after Virgin announced the record had been cancelled. However, the *Dust Sucker* release originated from a newly discovered set of Puler demos that Beefheart had apparently given to UK rock promoter Roger Eagle with his permission to release.

Though the 19 tracks of *Dust Sucker* should be considered as sketches rather than the finished masterpiece, their release allows the chance to hear how Beefheart intended the original, long lost album to sound. If in this version it never quite reaches the ecstatic form of tracks of *Trout Mask Replica* or *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*, there are moments where it gets sensually close. Backed by a Magic Band that includes guitarists Jeff Murrer and Denny Whaley, keyboard player John Thomas and drummer John French, Beefheart howls, hollers and hanks through a set of altered swells, barks, mutated free jazz and fractured field recordings, most of it scattershot with his playful postco.

Captain Beefheart's ability to turn seemingly musical word strings into tangible forms that take surrealistic shape inside his audience's imagination is still a thrilling thing to hear. On "Seem Cooked Sam," "Big Poop Hatch" and the stunning "Blackbirds," he joyously works and splashes spoken words like an old master, while his band of acrobats vigorously mix up a seemingly limitless musical palette of colours and tonal textures. But on the seven echo-laden live tracks filling out *Dust Sucker*, Beefheart sounds worn down by the constant effort to give his music been seriously by an industry that treated him as an eccentric outsider. Although of historical interest, their inclusion smudges the overall picture, lessening the impact of the studio recordings. For all the wild imagery of the best Bad Chain Puler sketches here, however, you can't escape the feeling that Beefheart was already sensually composing pushing all his energies into his painting. As the musical side of his creativity began to fade, his desire for acceptance as an internationally acclaimed fine artist was growing stronger.

HARRISON BIRTWISTLE
PULSE SHADOWS

TELESC 51000 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Harrison Birtwistle matters because he's both a part of the British "classical" music establishment and a critical thorn in its side

A new compilation chronicling Patti Smith's 25 year quest amplifies her shamanic, joyous babelogue, argues Bloddyn Butcher



Does among the howls: Patti Smith

PATTI SMITH
LAND (1975-2002)
ARISTA 075234708 2XCD

Land is Patti Smith's first ever compilation: two CDs of popular favourites, live recordings, demos and outtakes. Although such 'extras' are now standard issue, few retrospectives match *Land*'s attention to detail and scrupulous quality control. The tracks selected (the first CD was compiled from fans' choices) have been sequenced carefully and dramatically, which a chronological approach would obstruct. As a result, both discs are strong enough to be flogged.

Cunningly, the would-be title track, the idiosyncratic centrepiece of her 1975 debut, *Horses*, is not included. Nor, for that matter, are any of the extended, occasionally meandering improvisations from which subsequent album titles were drawn. Their omission is tactical rather than revisionist. One consequence is that the first disc, which cherry-picks Smith's eight major label releases, hurtles by. There's no filler. The hits that, with one exception, never were just keep on coming: anthems and dirges, tributes and diatribes. None pull their punches. They squawk and wail, cuss and sneer, lecture, provoke and free associate. It's a joyous babelogue. The only track that sounds remotely dated is the keyboard sound on "People Have The Power".

The album begins, intuitively, with invocation ("Dancing Babelogue" (from 1979's *Wave*) builds from a sinuous two chord riff into vertiginous chant: "Some strange music draws me in/Makes me come on like some Aerome" "Couldn't ask for a clearer description of the song's intended effect, or of Smith's ultimate achievement, she has become a real presence, a modern mystic whose influence compares to the shamans she emulates).

Such was always her wish. The first line of her first album lays out her terms: "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine." Although she's subsequently revised that contract, there's no rewinding chutzpah she was obviously thinking big "Gloria", the song the line introduces, quickly makes good her boast, transforming Van Morrison's suggestive bar band staple into a liberating, libidinous

faust. Hearing her spell her beloved's name out for the first time is still exciting. That "O" contains oceans, huge seas of possibility.

Smith hasn't lost her uncanny, alchemical ability to make something new from something nicked. The first disc ends with a superlative cover of Prince's "When Doves Cry" recorded fresh for the occasion; true to form, she takes the song and makes it wholly her own. Where Prince's original is brash and hectic, a blur of barely acknowledged emotion, Smith's version is raw and exposed. She lays herself open, cuts to the quick. Her voice is tender and solicitous. A guitar sobs beneath it, like the heartbeat of a cradled bird. The atmosphere is thrillingly intimate, palpably sensual. Smith gives the exquisite lyrics their due, somehow deepening Prince's domestic perspective without changing so much as a word. In her hands, no dove need be a winging pigeon while it can still pull symbolic weight, her performance here is so vividly forgiving it rewrites the red metaphor. The white bird of peace flies again! Or rather, it doesn't: it huddles beneath the eaves, expecting rain. The song is not so much transformed as realised, in another world, where life and death are recognised, the production, by career lieutenant Lenny Kaye, would ensure a hit.

This late revelation is the first of 12 previously unreleased tracks, many also freshly minted: on the second disc, only "Piss Factory" and "Come Back, Little Sheba" (B side to 1996's "Summer Cannibals") have been heard before. Of the five tracks recorded before Smith's re-emergence in the 90s after the death of her husband Fred "Sonic" Smith, "Piss Factory" still deserves special mention. Financed by Robert Mapplethorpe in 1974, it's the story of her escape from a life of drudgery. Working on a production line, "inspecting pipe", she passes and moans and bitches about the dreariness of her straits until she finally sees that her own intensity, this fierce desire for transcendence, is her ticket to ride. As a gesture of snottosed defiance, her triumphal cry of "I'm going to be somebody!" still exhilarates. And, unlikely as it may seem, Richard Sohl's barrelling piano still rocks. Too bad there was no room for the single's original flipside, the annexation of "Hey Joe" which patented her metamorphic adoption policy.

"Distant Fingers" (from 1975) is another daydream of escape, imagining close encounters as literal transcendences. The song was elaborately re-recorded for *Radio Ethiopia*, but the demo version included here, with funky wah-wah and clanking piano, works like a charm. Smith's appeal to passing UFOs – "Land" – is ambivalent: she's always been preternaturally adventurous.

The clutch of live recordings proves that Smith is still taking risks. Her music, like her writing, has always embraced experiment. Coltrane, Ayler and Hendrix inspired her improvisations on Fender Duo Sonic and clarinet as surely as Rimbaud, Genet and Dylan prompted her playing with words. Her determination to perform without a net was much maligned at the time of *Radio Ethiopia*'s release, but Sonic Youth and The No-Nick Blues Band, among others, have turned her sensibility to good use. As has Smith herself. On the evidence of the nine minute take on "Birdland", recorded last year with her current group (in which stalwarts Kaye and Jay Dee Daugherty are joined by Tony Shanahan and Oliver Ray), her longer excursions have regained their splendid momentum: the group coalesces as she takes pneumatic flight. From faltering campfire beginnings, this incantation has become a rock unit, improving in the teeth of performance songs which sounded stale in the studio. "Boy Oned Wolf" (from *Gung Ho*) is a snarling, baleful case in point.

The album concludes with another monologue, "Notes For The Future", recorded in New York last New Year's Eve, but written in 1996. It's a part call to arms, part prophecy and part rebel yell. By cutting the demotic appeal in the original opening – "What did we want?/What did we ever want?" – it risks opacity but continues, thanks to Smith's stonemason delivery, to assert the persistence of revolutionary ideals and radical community.

For all her fervour, she is not always po-faced. Tacked on as an uncredited afterthought is a live rendition of "Tomorrow", from *Annie*. Dedicating this unlikely chestnut to her mother, Smith belts it out with gusto, affection and goofy sincerity. You gotta admire her. She ain't gonna go gentle, not with movie like that. □



Best motherfucker since Oedipus: ELP

ELP FANTASTIC DAMAGE DEF JUX 0/337 COMP

It's coming up to the 30th anniversary of HipHop and sick bastards like me are still waiting for the crews that will become the Grand Funks and Golden Earrings of the next generation. By the time rock 'n' roll was 30 years old, it had become a lazy, bloated middle management type complete with love handles and man-breasts desperately trying to stay young, but generally looking like mutton dressed as lamb — and yeah, I know it's a mixed metaphor. Pushing middle age, HipHop's still svelte enough to pull young girls at the clubs: we've got plenty of Steve Winwoods and Van Halens, but where are the Starspans and the Styaxs? Where's the unintentional kitsch, the arena rock bombast, the stale working class epics masquerading as teen rebellion? Aside from some Tupac and Wyclef and City High, HipHop is just so damned un-AM! The aggressive mediocrity is just that: stuff that will be forgotten in a few months and will never get played on Clear Channel's Classic HipHop radio format. Where are the moments of morose, transcendent genius that in a just world would mark HipHop's promotion to corporate paradigm?

Well, you're certainly not going to find HipHop's equivalent of "We're An American Band" or "Radar Love" on ELP's first solo album. But I bring this up because — stay with me, the logic's pretty circuitous — Wire contributor Sasha Freere-Jones once quipped that ELP was the HipHop Steve Albini, and Albini has just curated the UK leg of this year's All Tomorrow's Parties, where the featured act was Cheap Trick, the 70s juggernaut that made Budokan a household name. Unlike his distinctly unpleasant music, Albini's

insistence on sharing the stage with the Quad Cities' greatest export shows that he's got a sense of humour buried underneath his hardcore asceticism. On the surface, it would be hard to conceive of ELP grooving to "Surrender" or beatboxing along with Bun E Carlos — after all, this was the guy who named Company Flow's first album *Funcrusher Plus*.

As Freere-Jones intimated, *Fantastic Damage* is the HipHop equivalent of such ugly, relentlessly masculine rock as Big Black, Helmet, Jesus Lizard, Pentra. The beats here aren't block rockin', but knock your block off — kind of similar to Ed Rush or Grooveaid without the speed. Indeed, this could be titled *Funcrusher Plus*: there are grooves buried in here, but they've been compressed in a trash compactor and taken out to a landfill in Staten Island where they get shot on by seagulls and gnawed at by rats. ELP is the "wrest motherfucker since Oedipus", and the sex rap, "Or Hell No Vs The Praying Mantas", feels like a Russ Meyer hate fuck without the absurdity or the comedy. In a syncretistic environment, this album would have the boric odour of the locker room — you could imagine Henry Rollins, Norman Mailer, Robert Anton Wilson and Philip K Dick doing bench presses to *Fantastic Damage*.

Buried inside its unremitting torrent of largely untranslatable code and forbidding urban Gothic grime, though, is a touching, vulnerable humanity and, dare I say, a sense of humour that elevates *Fantastic Damage* out of the preserve of survivalist Star Wars geeks playing Magic: The Gathering, "Stepfather Factory" may not be as staggeringly brilliant or shocking or moving as "Last Good Sleep" from *Funcrusher Plus*, but as an examination of capitalism, sex and family life it has no peers, aside from maybe "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" and "On Bondage, Up

El-P's demolition beats may be ugly as US hardcore, but the ex-Company Flow man's punk aesthetic staves off HipHop's middle age spread. By Peter Shapiro

Yours". Hidden in the song's crevices, there's even a quote from Hair Club For Men's Sy Sperling. ELP continues exorcising his childhood demons on "Constellation Funk": "And now I'm grown and I still can't protect my sister/But I know that she has her mother's strength within her/And maybe I can tap that strength and flirt with greatness/Expose these alcoholic stepfathers and rapists." "Tusany" features an almost uplifting crescendo rising out of the noise rubble which is echoed by the parting couplet: "This is for kids worried about the apocalypse/Do something, prepare yourself and stop talking shit."

Meanwhile, on a track called "Delonan", ELP finds time to drop a reference to the movie *Back To The Future*. "We need to go back in time to when motherfuckers could race BB mules per hour, bring it back to the block again/McFly/Peel the fuck out before the lightning hits the clock." But instead of making like Michael J Fox and jumping in the time machine to relive rock 'n' roll circa 1984, ELP attempts to revive HipHop circa 1984. His crunching drum machines and New Yorker rhythms could have easily underpinned a Billy Squier record; its ugly, primitive scratches could attest to a belief that graffiti splatter noise can bring down the walls of Jericho; and he wears black and red Air Jordans in one track. There's even a faint whiff of Reaganism about the proceedings — the belief in a past golden age, the moral revision at the modern world, the Daddy Knows Best masculinity. But ELP isn't riding in on his white horse to save HipHop from the villains terrorising the women and children. He's a punk aesthete pure and simple, venting spleen and channelling aggression. And right now, HipHop needs its aesthetes more than it needs fallen icons for next decade's Behind The Music.

Not for him the culturally endorsed, cutesy note-spinning that with depressing predictability exposes the Finnish contemporary music scene as woefully reactionary and self-regarding.

Birtwistle has the vision thing and uses it to produce statements with a life force all of their own. His operas (*The Mask Of Orpheus*, *Gaean*) and large-scale orchestral works (*The Triumph Of Time*, *Earth Dances*) are the grand public spectacles on which he built his reputation, but there has always been a more private and tender side to his music.

His 1976 work, *Melencolic*, for diatonic, harp and string orchestra, recalls a British tradition for aching melancholia that stretches way back as far as Henry Purcell and John Dowland, and *Pulse Shadows* (1996) exists in a comparable, emotionally taut and vulnerable soundworld. It is essentially a setting of nine poems by the post-war Romanian-Jewish poet Paul Celan for soprano and small chamber ensemble — in this recording, Claron McKendall and The Nash Ensemble — with nine commentaries for string quartet (here, The Arditi Quartet) interspersed between them. After utilizing the bizarre imagery of Celan's "White And Light" in a 1989 setting, Birtwistle became obsessed by the counterpart between the poet's Jewish faith and the fact he wrote in German.

Pianist and librettist Stephen Pruslin writes in his sleeve note about the poet's struggle with the inadequacies of language in the face of the Holocaust, and makes a connection with Birtwistle's own approach to developing melody. He writes "Melody attempted is as important as melody achieved." The opening string quartet movement of the cycle is pitched between evolving melody and all consuming noise, and in the final of the settings proper, *Adressenamen*, McKendall's soprano emerges gingerly from the strands of complex argument in the ensemble.

However it's in Rothwalsburg that the clarity of Birtwistle's concept and his complete engagement with Celan's poetry coincide. Here, soprano McKendall sings the poet's words in German while simultaneously speaking in English translation. The effect is immensely strong: the German text becomes like a ghostly memory and is elevated from reality while reinforcing the idea of mutual commentaries in Birtwistle's cycle. The final string quartet section draws all the musical reference points together into an intense midwest tune, and extends Birtwistle's historical trajectory to take in Ludwig Beethoven and Arlen Webern. By drawing on

disparate strands of cultural thought, Birtwistle has produced a thought-provoking and infinitely absorbing masterpiece.

IVA BITTOVÁ & CIKORI CIKORI

INDEX MAMMO 30 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Czech violinist Iveta Bitová is one of my favourite musical mavericks. Having studied seriously enough to release a recording of Béla Bartók's diatonic, she has also developed an instantly recognizable voice as an improviser on violin and vocals. She performs with a keen awareness of theatricality, founded on more than ten years' work as an actress in TV, film and theatre. This, coupled with her insistent fondness for song, melody and folk music, means that she doesn't quite fit into improvised music either. Appropriately, then, some of her early international exposure came via Fred Frith's 1989 film, *Sleep Across The Border*.

Best known here as a solo artist, Bitová now leads a quartet. Dixon, adding excellent Czech musicians on trumpet, double bass and drums to her core duo with acoustic guitarist Václav Václavík, with whom she recorded the well received 1997 live album.

These warm, intelligent, acoustic arrangements of songs that switch mood frequently make a perfect contrast for Bitová's always spontaneous style. She sings with an intimate softness that recalls Björk — here she can float lyrically, improvised lines over the group and trade nimble phrases with frontman Kucera's trumpet. Singing in harmony with the fiddle is one of Bitová's trademarks, and the album hits its stride when she does so in "Křídla", initiating a gradual build-up around Kucera's steel pan playing.

"Jungla" is a small gem of tongue-in-cheek jazz writing, with Björk's crinkling and spluttering over drumming as fresh as a Prague daisy. "Poljské Noze" is a suite of contrasting pieces, which move in and out of seven time with considerable poise, this is how Bitová adopts what she wants from the East European tradition to her own ends. Nothing is overstated, not even the kazoo and whistling on the final track, and the prevailing lightness of mood masks sophisticated musical ideas. But Bitová's personality is well up to the task of welding the whole into a personal, accessible piece of work.

BJÖRKENHEIM/HÅKER FLATEN/NILSEN-LOVE SCORCH TRIO

SUNNY GRAMMOPHON SCOR3025 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

The power trio format of guitar, bass and drums is universally understood, tested and tested. Yet it can be a double edged sword, either honed to expose the contemporary pitfalls of familiarity — with all the accrued historical precedents of Creams, Experiences or Power Loss in tow — or reveal the potential for 'leap of faith' reassessments latent within its structural democracy. Rauli Björkenheim is already recognised as a guitar virtuoso. His early works with Finnish counterpart, the late lamented Edward Vesala, and their group Kivakatu, are simply essential. More recently, Apocalypso (Cuneiform) and Revelator with Nedy Skopelios (Innerhythmic) showcase both his compositional and playing skills. In much of this output, however, he sounds like a singular voice in search of a context. Ironically, this *Scorch Trio* recording with the younger rhythm section of Ingvald Håker Fugén on bass and Rauli Nilsen-Love on drums feels like a coming of age.

If Rauli Björkenheim's reputation preceded him, it certainly didn't fair his collaborators. Not only do they enter into this transaction as fully paid up partners, it's Håker Flaten and Nilsen-Love who set things in motion on "Okioaku", with a penetrating and persistent polyrhythmic attack designed to goad the guitarist into action. Taking his time, he allows the rhythm duo to establish an unstoppable momentum before he unleashes music of equal power: no hesitation, no dispute, only a certainty about the 'rightness' of the endeavour.

Recorded live to analogue tape over two days in January 2002, with its 'nobody solos, everybody rules' title firmly established, the whole session radiates confidence. The trio's level of integration far outstrips its existence as an entity, laboriously dividing when to give towards critical mass and when to allow space into the proceedings. And the scope of their improvisational ideas is breathtaking. To be able to both listen and react at this level of intensity is a rare gift.

As one would expect with Björkenheim, stylistic boundaries are meaningless and soundlessly dispersed with. The trio embrace jazz, rock and free sensibilities in their drive to release maximum energy, with each member capitalizing the other to hitherto unexplored levels of expression. Although the CD is nominally

divided into six pieces, the music is really one extended work covering a plethora of mood swings, timbre and tonality.

Quite simply, this is joyous music, with a spirit very much akin to The Mahoning Orchestra's *The Inner Missing Flame*. What this trio will be capable of when they have had time to draw breath is a truly exciting prospect.

GIULIERMO E BROWN SOUL AT THE HANDS OF THE MACHINE

THIRSTY EAR TH857118 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Drummer Guillermo Brown replaced Suse Ibarra in the David S Ware Quartet. He has also recently appeared on Ray Campbell's *It's Krumpholtz* and Matt Ship's *No Logo*. Described by Ship as a "heavy groove drummer", he lights the load a little on his debut as leader, producing an eclectic mix of avant jazz, electronics and hip-hop. The result is a highly rewarding album that needs many listens to appreciate properly. The tracks include heavyweight hornmen Daniel Carter, who features on half the tracks, vocalist Lataisha Natasha Duggs and multi player Andre Vito on flute, and various others make cameo appearances. Brown himself is on percussion, vocals, synths and programming. He's aided by engineer Chris Fiam, who is known for his expertise in mixing live and electronic sounds for DJ Spooky, Matthew Ship and William Parker.

With 12 tracks over a relatively brief 48 minutes, none outstays its welcome. The jazzist tracks are those which feature Carter, though the pervasive grooves and glossy production mean there's little obvious connection with the jazz. The most outstanding creations, such as "If We Can Ever Find A Way" and "Das Funktion", display near starbusts of sound in an attractively bright tonality. This vital, optimistic music mostly avoids the darker currents of hip-hop. But *Matter And More* shows Brown's tender swing with Lataisha Duggs's vocals, while "Outside Looking In" aims at a vey effect. The result is the kind of enigmatic synthesis you might expect from this adventurous label.

BUDAPASTIS LA BOUCHE FERMÉE

HYETERMARES DISCORIBE HD005 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

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VARIOUS

FREEDOM OF THE CITY 2001:

SMALL GROUPS

(EMANEM 4206 2XCD)

VARIOUS

FREEDOM OF THE CITY 2001:

LARGE GROUPS

(EMANEM 4206 2XCD)

VARIOUS

SEVENTH OF MAY 2001:

FREEDOM OF THE CITY

(MATCHLESS MRAY 2XCD)

This year's Freedom Of The City festival takes place this month at London's Conway Hall. Last year's gathering of free improvisers is documented on these three releases celebrating the expressive latitude of that large and growing number of musicians who have emphatically discarded the "mind-forg'd manacles" that William Blake once heard in every London voice. Though the participants arrive by no means all indigenous Londoners, FOTC draws from a creative pool unpolluted by metropolitan chiciness. The maturity of the scene makes it an increasingly attractive platform of stability for adventurous musicians from a wide range of backgrounds. These three companion sets feature some of the seasoned players who built that platform, and the younger generation who are continuing the open-ended project.

The Small Groups sessions were convened by Emanem proprietor Martin Davidson, an urban cartographer for the enquiring ear. A well-matched trio of trumpeter Ian Smith, trombonist Gail Brand and Oren Marshall on tuba kick off with confidence, exploring brass options from the declaratory and dignified to the grossly flautant, from squeals to low moans. The next three tracks present the well-established trio of pianist Vynian Weston, drummer Mark Sanders and bassist John Edwards. Weston has a singular knack of never sounding definitive, each statement, however vigorous, seems provisional, implying other routes the music might take, placing

brackets around the tough decisiveness of Sanders and Edwards. Three further tracks bring together singer (and tapdancer) Maggie Nicolo, almost (and vocalist) Caroline Kraabel and Zurich violinist Charlotte Hug. The voice sets a flexible and wide ranging agenda; sax and viola enhance and embellish.

The second Small Groups disc opens with a pair of piano improvisations by Pat Thomas, the first a chunk of jagged granite, the second an intricate out through with hints of stendry. Two tracks feature Charlotte Hug with violinist Phil Durrant, cellist Mark Wastell and bassist Tony Wren (a quartet which recorded the excellent Emanem CD *Angel Gate*). It's intensive listening music, packed with eloquent details and delicate intersections. Three compelling duets couple John Butcher's visceral yet serialised saxophone playing with Steve Beresford's fabulously off-centre, cliché-free electronics. Lol Coahill on soprano, trombonist Paul Rutherford, guitarist John Russell, percussionist Roger Turner and vocalist Phil Minton bring proceedings to an unhurried close. Well, freedom can be comfortable too.

Emerging from a supportive community, FOTC's participants readily display a willingness to learn from each other as they explore the wealth of possible permutations within their number. For example, the Strings ensemble opening the Large Groups set with two lengthy improvisations are sufficiently elastic in conception to incorporate Chris Burn's piano, Hugh Davies on amplified strings and springs and Kalfé Matthews welding laptop sampler from a seat in the audience, as well as nine string players. The opener unfolds gradually, a rolling continuum of small gestures with spots of turbulence and stretches of tranquility, made strange in places by the mournful wailing of Sylvia Hallatt's sarangi. For the second piece the string players are joined by Evan Parker, whose soprano sax spins and darts over a steady yet variegated surface of rubbed and plucked sounds.

The remainder of the double album is given over to the flourishing London Improvisers Orchestra, a massive group that here channels huge energies

through seven compositions for improvisors, then shifts into full improvisatory mode for an exhilarating final half-hour. There were 39 members in attendance but skilled listening, shared understanding, unadmitted writing and shrewd conducting keeps the juggernaut on course throughout. The depth of the total group sound is awesome. Reined in, as on Simon H Fell's "Morton's Mobile", the LIO broods magnificently. The entire programme is invigorating but Terry Day's recitation of his poem "An If, But, To And When", punctuated by the return of the fabulous rampaging herd, is specially irresistible.

7 May 2001 was Matchless Day, programmed by Eddie Prevost. The afternoon CD starts with the Bark! trio of drummer Philip Marks, Rex Caswell on electric guitar and Paul Obermayer's electronics. Their music progresses with the cripplingly regularity of a Jean Tinguely machine-sculpture, a hobbling insistence that is strangely involving. Prevost's solo with barrel drum and bowed cymbals conjures an equally arresting image of arcane industry – watchmaker and foundry worker conflated in precise and mysterious activity. A trio of John Lely (sax and electronics), Seymour Wright (alto sax) and Yann Characou (snare drum and voice) is sparse and quiet, cohering with the logic of ritualistic restraint. Prevost returns to initiate the evening session, in symbiosis with bassist John Edwards and saxophone soloist Tom Chant. For 35 minutes their voices goad, mesh, build and probe, mutually supportive and testing. There's lively group interplay within the Particles quartet – Ronald Wadych on bass guitar, Sandy Kindness on tenor, drummer Tim Golde and Ross Lambert on electric guitar. Then Wadych craftily invents terms of exchange between his bass and Denis Dubovtsev's soprano. The disc's fitting conclusion brings together AMM pianist John Tibury and Evan Parker on tenor, conversing easily and urbanely for 20 minutes. Between them, this duo represents a convergence of the major improvising streams that for decades have helped keep London's free music pool fresh and vital.

London Improvisers Orchestra (left) and Maggie Nicolo, Caroline Kraabel and Charlotte Hug at Freedom Of The City, 2001

Free music is the key to Londoners losing their 'mind-forg'd manacles', says Julian Cowley, after hearing the evidence from 2001's Improv summit



PHOTO: DENNIS AUGUSTIN/SAF JAMES COLLECTION

meeting of Firing De Quengo and Loe Baghis, of the French avant pop for kids group Omgibus, and SKY, a duo consisting of Zolt Kovacs and Zolt Soles on guitar and viola respectively. De Quengo's minimalist percussive parties shades of John Stevens here and there, while Baghis's high pitched breathy desinations suggest what Gene Gogan might have done, held she been in JAM! instead of Altair's images.

The front cover photograph – a bottle of wine, a bunch of cherries and two large hunks of bread and cheese – says more about the spirit of the music than the other forbidding structural rhetoric of Joakim Casner's *La Bouche Fendue* is a relaxed and convivial pair of extended improvisations, clocking in at 38 and 34 minutes. Not only does it prove that the language of free improvisation knows no boundaries, in keeping with the spirit of pioneers such as the SWE and AMM, it also shows it doesn't have to be aggressively virtuosic or frighteningly intense to be satisfying. Nobody pushes anyone else about. There's as much room for despoils as there is for stoniness here, despite SKY's manifesto extolling the virtues of the latter, and their approach leaves plenty of space for Baghis to approach her totally improvised narratives.

MAXIME DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD AVEC LES AUTOMATES KI COLLECTION SOMANBUDE DISQUE POUT POUT NO NUMBER CD BY BEN BORTHWICK

Maxime does Maxime De La RocheFoucauld is a sound sculptor who creates small automata from bottles, boxes, tins and all kinds of everyday objects combined with springs and sticks, cymbals, bells, cans, drums and other pieces of percussion (see The Wire 213). Assembling them into an automaton orchestra, he assumes the role of conductor by controlling the frequency output which activates the sculptures. For the full visual spectacle of his extraordinary objects, check his Website at homepage.mac.com/automates

However, the nine improvisations of Collection Somanbude (more for sleepwalkers) prove his automata also go the distance, musically speaking. Lasting between five and eight minutes, each improvisation contains challenging musical structures subjected to high levels of contingency. Not only do they look like Surrealist objects, the unpredictability of the electrical impulses that make them twitch also bears out the analogies the Surrealists used to make between automata, trance-like rituals and the workings of the unconscious.

De La RocheFoucauld suggests his largely percussive automata with a wicker sculpture and "real" instruments such as clavier, trumpet and accordion. Each has its own sound, like a different kind of world music with unforced map references. Though they're rudgerly familiar you just can't place their source. The dissonance of "La Botte Somanbude" suggests a gaseous warning up in a Chinese court, while the loose lead drums and screeching horn of "La Choeur Somanbude" recall joyous drumming. But instead of suddenly launching into a frenetic rhythm, the latter holds to the down tempo of a 70s West Coast jazz combo. On the most mechanical piece, "La Voche Somanbude", the

beat speeds up and slows down in time with a robotic grunt, while a mouth harp sounds like an automaton straining for language.

MORTON FELDMAN LAST PIECES CD RSCA ALBUM CD

MORTON FELDMAN COMPLETE WORKS FOR TWO PIANISTS ALICE ALBUM CD BY ROM FERGARD

Written in 1959, Feldman's *Last Pieces For Piano* were, of course, nothing of the sort. A sizeable amount of his subsequent output concerned the piano, whether as a solo or ensemble instrument, and Stephen Graszburg's *Last Pieces CD* features works from each end of the composer's career. The centerpiece is the 25 minute *Pais de Mar*, written in 1986 for Feldman's student Bruno Marcus. Here, musical cells position themselves around one another on a canvas of austere pedal resistance. But in Graszburg's recording, a close, dense and heavy acoustic transforms this resonance from a familiar late Feldman glow into rock. With the piano itself sounding rather complex in terms of tuning and sonority, the music feels clarity – and certainly far removed from the distant clearness that Feldman's music is often recorded. Just as the recorded sound is less than precious, so is Graszburg's playing.

Graszburg is happy to take everything at his own pace, his healthy touch and dynamic making a refreshing antithesis to the rather general performance tradition that has grown up around this body of work. He clicks his way through the collection's slow movements with heavy arms, and leaps through the fast with unfettered momentum. AMM's John Tilbury, a musician who can achieve delicacy without passivity, talks about the "almost erotic" relationship between the Feldman pianist's fingertips and keyboard, but Graszburg brings a different sort of physicality to the music, roughly tender as he is here.

From 1953, *Intermission 6* is written in mobile form, with the pianist's travelling around isolated fragments in any order they choose. While Graszburg's performance is actually either ascetic, the four versions of the same piece offered by Kristine Scholz and Mats Persson on the Alice label's *Two Pianists* collection tend towards something warmer, ranging from the impressionist to the grand and hymn-like. Most of the music on this Swedish duo's set dates from the 1950s. Feldman's self-described "Webern period" Given the artlessness of Feldman's music, his adaption of such a chronologically virtuosic and bombastic medium as the piano may seem surprising. But he is not interested in showy velocity, he's instead concerned with space and texture. The inevitable discrepancies between the instruments, tuning and sound characteristics add weight to chords, the fundamental building blocks of many of the works here. Two pieces stand out as unusual in this context: the manic *Joan*, a two piano version of music written for Mezei Cunningham's *Successor* in 1958, and, from the same year, an unpublished *Work For Two Pianists*. The latter piece suggests a new

direction for Feldman, making a move away from the "Webernian", with the music swinging pendulum-like from one repetitive motif to another.

FLIM GIVEN YOU NOTHING RSCA ALBUM CD BY DAVID ELLIOTT

Despite the bleak title, Flim's debut album for the consistently excellent Translab label is disarmingly agreeable. The kind of sounds Dresden-based Enrico Wulke creates on *Given You Nothing* recalls the early work of Cluster's Hans-Joachim Roedelius, the piano music of Patrick Partella and even Virginia Adley's from *Gardens Where We Feel Secure*. To Rococo Rot's pared down minimalism is also evident in Wulke's extremely measured arrangements for piano, organ and some well-chosen software, which are suitably way too cool and contemporary to end up sounding merely nice.

A moment or two there was one, "Hell" opens the album with a beautifully poignant piano refrain which Harold Budd would be proud of. If Hell is simply somewhere sad, it suggests, well, things could be worse. The more sprightly "Plural" juxtaposes a Stone Machin left hand with a *Roedelius* right, before stumbling to a seemingly bewildering ending. "Luvier" is all warm washes of modulation set to a tick-tocking clock and slow vibraphone loop. "April" simply glitters and shimmers. These opening references aside, the understated charm and originality marking Flim's debut album lands her in a world of his own. And at 40 minutes, you're in no rush to leave it.

FLY PAN AM CEUX QUI INVENTENT N'ONT JAMAIS VECU (?) CONSTITUTIONAL CRYSTAL CD BY MIA CLARKE

As part of the Montreal collection centred around the Constitutional label (A Silver Mt Zion, *Goldspeed You Black Emperor!*, *Melissae*), Fly Pan Am develop an instrumental rock that stays too close to classical boundaries. Comparing guitarists Roger Levier (also a member of Godspeed!) and Jonathan Porant, bassist JS Trachy and drummer Felix Merli, Fly Pan Am's bounding context might well have been "new wave meets no wave" self-sabotage. But on *Ceux Qui Inventent...*, they move away from the delayed, repetitive soundscaping of their self-titled debut album from 1999. The beauty of this awkward follow up, and indeed Fly Pan Am's art, presently lies in the group's intuitive juxtapositions of wiry, kinetic outbursts and stretches of immaculately sculptured musique concrete made regular rhythmic forms.

The opening moments are tense. A dense hum of static layers in the background before being fractured by simple, jolting basslines and stuttering electronic systems. The addition of coraxes, mechanical samples flays the piece into red patterns that are broken only by an oddity trend, organic junkyard beat.

Ceux Qui Inventent... is, in effect, as unpredictable as it is temperamental. Restricted robotics suddenly and furiously disintegrate into knife-edge feedback, flung through a restrained series of dry funk guitar loops and boisterous, motown dancing. The closing track, "La Vie Se Dit D'être Vécue Ou Commentons Vive", best

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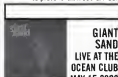
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Working with Fontella Bass has injected new tension into Cinematic Orchestra's oceanic astro-jazz. By Kodwo Eshun

Grace and Fave: Cinematic Orchestra

CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA EVERYDAY

WINDY CITY, ILLINOIS

Cinematic Orchestra arrived from nowhere, fully formed and statesmanlike, in late 1999, with their gracious debut single, "Ode To The Big Sea/Channel 1 Suite", two eight minute-plus epics as potent as a Dogen benediction. Both tracks were powered by forceful, Cecil McBee-influenced stand-up bass riffs, implacable loops of *Africa Brass*-style French horn and soprano sax unison lines and plaintive vocal samples, all arranged for maximum dynamic introspection. It felt as if CO had studied the endings of their favourite records and built tracks from those climactic yet subsiding moments.

CO's sensibility was epitomised by drum patterns that travelled right around the kit, dropping and filling accents while retaining a sense of intricately constructed loops. Like Jazzenova, 4 Hero and other late 90s post-drum 'n' bass heads, CO's leader Jason Swinscoe began by integrating loops sampled from a live drummer. CO made me realise that the rhythmic affect of what people used to call "abstract beats" or "downbeats" had totally changed since 1990, when Peter Savino reported on the despondent stoner trudge of Park Recordings/Mo Wax/Ninja Tune and similar labels such as Pussyfoot. The "time feeling", as critic Ben Sidran called it, had stretched out into a little, confident maximalism that moved between Prog funk and Prog rock. A trace memory of reverent spirituality was coming through in the Alice Coltrane mood of the stand-up bass. In my mind, CO were, and are, part of a strangely overlooked wave of post-98 groups and producers that suddenly rearranged the dialectic between the

main room and the second room. Groups with heavy 'Prog' names and attitudes, groups like Hefner, Frigate, Four Tet, Mice Parade, Dylan Group, HMM, Amalgamation Of Soundz, Jazzenova, NuSprint Helsinki, 4 Hero, Zero 7, Bent, Broadway Project and many others, all doomed to be championed by Gilles Peterson, but under-acknowledged nonetheless.

For all their debut single's greatness, Motion, CO's debut album, released at the same time, was heavy going. Constructing tracks from what sounded like endings created a mood of lassitude, a trait compounded on their otherwise strong *Remix* album by introductions that tended to outstay their welcome. CO's second album, *Everyday*, however, skirts these downsides. It expands its timbral and rhythmic palette, and hones the signatures that made this most magisterial of groups feel important right from the off.

Everyday is full of anticipation, as if the arrangements are holding their breath. That feeling is there in "Man With The Movie Camera", in the split second switch before the horns roll over you like a yellow line down an eight lane blacktop, in the duet between John Ellis's a piano fills and Tom Chant's regal screams of soprano sax. In the way you're suspended as Rhodin Davies's harp sweeps through "All That You Give" and rests for a beat so that PJ France's bass can stride over the tidal reach of Swinscoe's string samples. In the way Patrick Carpenter's primitive synths deflate to make way for Fontella Bass's entrance.

I'll admit I wasn't thrilled by the thought of CO importing a famous free jazz affiliated soul singer all the way from St Louis. Homage, respect or cultural cringe? I couldn't decide which. For sure, though, Bass

brings an authoritative seriousness to her tracks and, by implication to the entire album. If you haven't heard much at all from Fontella Bass since "Theme De Noyo" from The Art Ensemble Of Chicago's 1972 *Les Stances A Sophie* soundtrack, then her tender, wrenching plaint for departed husband Lester Bowie will floor you. Even when her lyrics, as on "Evolution", are humdrum, her stern voice commands complete attention.

It's drummer Luke Flowers that gets my gold star, though, for providing the beats that charge up Swinscoe's loops. Check out "Rite", where his ridiculously catchy fills not only epitomise state of the art trompe l'oreille, but also play Robert Wyatt-style 'mimic melodies' to PJ France's Mike Ratledge-style Rhodes. For three mesmerising minutes into the 11 minute "All Things To All Men", CO make like Soft Machine circa "Soft Weed Factor" on Volume 6, repeating a delayed sax riff and violin phrase into mantric magic. Then Cedric Pimpemel himself, aka Rodney Smith aka Roots Manuva, saunters through, demanding, "Just say when and I'll take you to my Tardis/Who's the hardie?".

If PJ France's McBee-style bass instils a sinewy serenity throughout *Everyday*, the kalimba samples Swinscoe keeps returning to set up a compelling state of meditative minimalism. *Everyday*'s title track epitomises this white twentysomething South Londoner's vision of a South African-inspired Ambient music. It's a zone of discreet engagement that Maxxmaster Mums once termed "subtle". Like those other whiteboy Afrophiles Zero 7 and Hefner, CO choose African vocalism to articulate mournful states of yearning, integrating chorale and consonants to create wordless laments. Why is this the case, I wonder? □

showcases the group's despicably patchwork features. Its opening, abrupt churn of swooping keyboards and jazz waxes gives way to a tape of destroyed guitar strings when the rhythm section comes to a sudden halt, before picking up and going out in a tight fusion of swinging drums and discolored strumming.

Closure yet? Imaginary. *Cœur Qui Inventent*, effectively despoils nice conjurations of rock and electronics, with its deftly detuned instruments and oblique beats irregularly set in informal yet precise structures.

REINHOLD FRIEDL & MICHAEL VORFELD AU DÉFAUT DU SILENCE

THRENT OISEAUX TOUSSE CD
BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

This recording for Benoît Garter's treble oiseau imprint will do nothing to effect the critical accolade accruing around Berlin-based pianist/composer Reinhold Friedl and his ensemble *Zentaurus* (see *The Wire* 215), whose most recent activities have scored performances of Lou Reed's atonal score/rock *Motor Machine Music*. This disc recording hardly offers a more intimate or revealing setting from which to approach Friedl's work. Nor do the minimal sleaze credits—"friedl inside piano, Vorfeld, percussion and stringed instruments"—tell you much about the sinuous and categorical dislocations so effectively effected by the music within.

Literally playing it from the inside, Friedl's approach to performance launches his prepared instrument into a soundworld utterly removed from those originally discovered by prepared piano pioneer John Cage. Strings are plucked, poked, stroked or hit by hand or a variety of wooden or metal sticks and mallets. But, remarkably, the resulting sounds almost entirely relieve wholly from their astatic instrumental source, projecting the listener into a situation in which, as Garter has noted, any anticipated distinctions between instrumental and electroacoustic music, or between improvisation and composition, are dissolved or transfigured.

The unearthly sounds exorcised from Friedl's piano are matched by the hugely sympathetic and no less disorientating contributions of Michael Vorfeld on his self-designed stringed instruments, his playing methods every bit as oblique and surprising as Friedl's. The opening 27 minute cut, "Smooth Attack," begins with bowed gong-like sounds, from which the duo gradually elicit treble, airy and, at times, harshly abrasive sonorities, whose internal dynamics determine both composition and performance. The duo's apparent excavation of performance and personality from an otherwise repressed music finally directs the ear solely towards the internal movement of sound. Indeed, the balance between Friedl and Vorfeld is at times so perfectly poised that it allows each to efface himself out of the process of the music's performance.

BURNT FRIEDMAN & JAKI LIEBEZET SECRET RHYTHMS

NONPLACE NON1011 CD
BY JEROME MAUNICILL

In the rather tongue-in-cheek sleeve notes to this long-awaited collaborative album between

Cologne's shapeshifting Burnt Friedman and legendary ex-Can drummer Jaki Liebezet, we are told that "in the eye of the storm they are borne by secret rhythms and daffy mania onto round the jagged rocks of 4/4 time." Elsewhere, Friedman has described this project, which also takes in Jaki's Sacha on guitar and Morten Granov on vibraphone, as "casually investigating old time signatures." And indeed their investigations are pretty successful, so long as you underline the word "casually." More than anything else, the overall mood on *Secret Rhythms* is one of loose, organic, intentionally reworking improvisation.

As you might expect from someone like Friedman, who has dabbed electronic music with reggae, Latin, Tü's fusion and jazz elements, this disc glides effortlessly across genres. Whereas the sound occasionally carries close to EDM, at other moments it recalls Tortoise, rustic dub, cocktail jazz—albeit with just enough rhythmic obtuseness to avoid schmilge—and even various echoes of ethnic music. Liebezet's drums steer the freewheeling group's overall direction, but the never take control stage. The beats follow his leadward template of endless, meandering repetitions and subtle variations, but they never power along with the tribal momentum of Can in their prime.

As well as contributing melodic, steel drum and kalimba, Friedman himself weaves strings of sparkling keyboard lines across the audio field. "Shades Of Sodin Onon" begins portentously with heavily reverberated single notes hanging in the ether and sprinklings of cymbal, before building up a mildly edgy atmosphere. "Rasta Fahndung" is rural sounding reggae with wheezing melodic "Gullu Verman" evokes a subdued night on an imaginary Caribbean island. The disc closes with three very diverse versions of a mysterious tune called "Obscured By It." Nothing seems going on here, maybe, but that appears to be the gameplan. By turns defiantly laid, playful and exploratory, it's a quiet revelation.

KENNETH GABURO FIVE WORKS FOR VOICES INSTRUMENTS AND ELECTRONICS

NEW WORLD 80668 CD
BY DAN WARGUTER

Composer Kenneth Gaburo (1926-93) refused to be pigeonholed. His work went in many directions and, as a result, was unfairly overlooked. He pursued a highly individual trajectory veering between freeform work in theatre and conventional faculty teaching in Bronx, San Diego (where he befriended and championed that other great American outsider, Harry Partch) and finally living, apparently indifferent to the established New Music performing scenes. In the mid-1950s, when many young composers were beating a path to Darmstadt to breathe the heady air of total serialism, Gaburo went instead to Rome to study with Goffredo Petrassi. His *Song Quartet in One Movement* (1956) chugs along like any number of mid-20th century, post-Bartok modernist workouts, with Gaburo showing little apparent interest in the serialised rhythmic complexity that was all the rage in Darmstadt. But behind its austere exterior, strange things are afoot: Gaburo's contemporary writing has a logic all of its own, and notions of foreground/background

are cunningly blurred.

Anthony R (Pascal), with its fondness for harsh high registers and shattered phonetics—and, at times, a seeming indifference to standard notions of "beauty"—looks closer to Varese and forward to Ferneyhough. The release of this crazy, challenging piece from 1967 and Anthony R (Paul-White Moments) from five years earlier is cause for celebration. Scored for 16 voices and electronics, Anthony R, a 16 minute setting of a poem by Virginia Woolf, is one of the great pioneering works using electronics in performance. Easily on a par with established classics by Bero and Stockhausen, it knocks the spots off the dreary academic American competition of the period.

Were it not for the boy sound quality, you might be fooled into thinking that Mouth Piece Scalet for Solo Trumpet is the latest offering from Greg Kelly or Franz Haubinger. Jack Logan's virtuoso reading—Wolfgang, declaring a Gaburo poem through the instrument—is both absolutely hilarious and slightly scary. Dating from 1970, the piece was unprecedented in the extraordinary demands it makes on the performer, who is called upon to articulate six contrapuntal lines simultaneously.

After such New Complexity, *The Flow Of It* (U) belongs in the minimalistist bin. Elmor Barron, Philip Lajon and Linda Voleman heroically attempt the awesome task of singing the same note for 23 minutes, and the listener's attention is drawn to the resulting rhythm of tiny imperfections. This is required listening for anyone interested in American 20th century composition.

GEEZEE N' GOSH NOBODY KNOWS MILK PLANTER WITH IT

BY SENBORN-MICK

Electronica might not be the first place you'd go looking for religious revelation, but Atom Heart's Geezee N' Gosh alias brings God to the clicks + cuts on track. Thankfully, the God Atom Heart invokes here is already historical. Called from American Deep South spirituals, gospel and vintage blues, it is emptied of meaning by cliché and the distance of time. All that remains is the overwhelming sense and yearning of a voice. You don't have to be a believer to be moved, either emotionally or on the dancefloor, by the pleading desire caught in the album's scanty samples, nor to trace the music's trajectory back to the heart of soul aesthetics.

Like an electronics cousin of Thomas Brinkmann's *Soul Center* project, the crux here is the juxtaposition between the bodily register of the source material and the disembodied digital matrix they're grafted onto. Samples are cut up, cropped and looped. Where they remain intact, on tracks like "We Call On Him" and "Singing Down Sweet Onions," they are slowed down to a narcotic mawkishness. Clicks + cuts are in full effect, as unstable, minimal House rhythms stutter and wheeze around the samples. Elsewhere, on "Body And Soul," samples are shattered and its remaining shards are integrated into the rhythmic structure. The album's high point, "Play," looks a slow, lumbering Moorhouse groove to the imploring sample to "pray", spanning in counterpoint with a clipped keyboard "The Love Of God" is a gorgeous Ambient pop that gradually slips into



LE FLY PAŃ AM CEUX QUI INVENTENT N'ONT JAMAIS VECU(?)



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Two slyly influential American cult groups are reissued this month. Peter Shapiro and Biba Kopf salute a pair of hardcore heroes



Tragic figures: Mission Of Burma today (left); Savage Republic in 1985

MISSION OF BURMA
SIGNALS, CALLS, AND MARCHES
RHYTHM DISC R10509 CD

VS

RHYTHM DISC R10509 CD

THE HORRIBLE TRUTH ABOUT BURMA
RHYTHM DISC R10509 CD

BY PETER SHAPIRO

For Americans, punk was never a cheeky art school prank; it could never be reduced to style — no matter how much the writers on *Maximum Rock Roll* tried. While Brits have always appreciated irony and posing more than their New World cousins, punk killed it dead. Straight Edge, Husker Du, Fugazi, Emoc give 'em some acoustic guitars, a trust fund and relocate them to rural North Carolina and you've got a few hundred James Taylors on your hands.

The first of this legion of intelligent and fervent young men was Mission Of Burma. While the first wave of punk certainly had its fair share of art rockers and poetry students, Roger Miller, Clint Conley, Peter Prescott and Martin Swope made it next generation by eliminating the distance between thought and expression. On "Max Ernst," the 8 side of their first single and included here as part of an expanded version of the 1981 EP *Signals, Calls, and Marches*, MOB linked lyrics like "People did not like that man Max Ernst/The Blessed Virgin chastises the infant Jesus/He was so irascible, Max Ernst/Garden airplane trap, garden airplane trap" with Piero Ubu-style guitar angles and puny but abstract basslines, slightly thrumming out the Cleveland sound but making it even more neurotic, skitschy and wry. Their greatest record was "That's When I Reach For My Revolver", which may very well be the founding moment of US post-punk: spiky, trebly guitar, strangely awkward but punchy bass, almost meandering tempos, painfully earnest lyrics that look awful on paper but somehow work on record. This, and the rest of *Signals...*, is the blueprint of almost everything that has come after: Husker Du, Sinto, math rock, Tortoise, heck, even Moby and REM have covered songs from it.

1982's *VS* is almost as important. The basic formula is the same — thick dubois of grating guitars

in strange tunings, dry production, the 80s obsession with irony finally taken just about to its logical conclusion — but even artier, even more self-conscious. On the original version of *VS*, the alienation ("I said my father's dead/Well I don't care about it/It happens anyway"), the camouflage, the tension is resolved by the direct punk attack of "That's How I Escaped My Certain Fate". Here, though, the four bonus tracks added on at the end slightly deaden the impact — not that it's not nice to have them.

The *Horrible Truth About Burma* documents the group's final tour in 1983. While the version of "1970" included here will always have a special place in my heart as my introduction to The Stooges, there's plenty here to recommend it to those without the baggage of remembrance, including seething versions of "I... Revolver", "Learn How", "Red" and an epic reading of Piero Ubu's "Heart Of Darkness".

SAVAGE REPUBLIC
TRAGIC FIGURES
MOBILIZATION MOB101 CD

CEREMONIAL + TRUDGE
MOBILIZATION MOB102 CD

**JAMAHIRIYA DEMOCRATIQUE ET
POPULAIRE DE SAUVAGE**
MOBILIZATION MOB103 CD

CUSTOMS
MOBILIZATION MOB104 CD

BY BIBA KOPF

The founding fathers of Los Angeles hardcore group Savage Republic weren't going for the popular vote when they declared their independence under a banner bearing an Arabic palm tree and crescent moon symbol in 1981, when memories of the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 were still burning holes in American pride. After Vietnam, American hurt is notoriously slow to heal, and the hostage incident now echoes through the call for national unity in the wake of 11 September. Savage Republic could have chosen a less inflammatory moment to raise their flag again, but they've never been strong on diplomacy.

Whatever, the reissue of their four studio albums, recorded between 1982 and 1989, is timely. Savage

Republic wrapped themselves in the cloak of a hated regime as a post-punk challenge to their home's democratic impulses. Their first missives — the "Tragic Figure" single and parent album, *Tragic Figures* — carried brutal images of revolution and reprisal under an Arabic scroll. By aligning themselves with outsiders, they forced liberal Americans to look closer to home for the source of American ills. "The crisis of our country/Is not caused by external forces/The danger lies within," they intone on "Procession". Similarly ambiguous, the music inside is a mixture of monotonous guitars churning over the grinding roar of two or three basses and the clang of junkyard percussion. This music emerges out of the desert sun beating down on the raw noise of a new revolutionary state undergoing industrialization. Their open-throated songs upturn punk inebriety, at once comic and unsettling — "You have come to teach but we have come to eat". Yet on "Procession" and "Film Noir" (both *Tragic Figures*), they analyse the siege-gang mentality behind calls to national unity with chilling economy.

But Savage Republic's true strength resides in grim, determined guitar instrumentalism such as "Mobilization", "Empty Quarter" and "Ivory Coast" (all *Tragic Figures*), which leave slow trails of notes like bloodied footprints in the sand. The *Trudge EP*, now combined with their second album *Ceremonial*, modifies their march-or-die urgency for a more percussion-heavy line-up. Meanwhile, internal divisions over the instrumentals versus songs issue are beginning to peak. This post-apocalyptic instrumental-only remix of the mid-1980s *Ceremonial* album signals a posthumous victory over the vocal faction for founder Bruce Lucher, also the independent Project Press printer of Savage Republic's artwork. Adjusting the pace for a long march, the epic tracks on *Ceremonial* draw heavily on Theodorakis and Morricone influences. Sadly Lucher lost out to the vocalists on Jamahiriya (1987), where it's heart-breaking to hear a song-sectored take of the evocative instrumental, "Spice Fields". A final album, the fractious and ill-tempered *Customs*, was recorded in late 1988 in Greece, where Savage Republic's early Theodorakis tribute, "O Adonis", had fanned their popularity. They split a year later. □

a rhythm, and "Sing You Children" is dubbed out, electronic abstraction

ANNIE GOSFIELD FLYING SCAFFOLDS AND HEAVY MACHINERY TADPOLE T22559 CD

by CLIVE BELL

In what sounds like a promising setting for a comic culture clash won't by David Lodge, New York composer Annie Gosfield was sponsored by industrial giant Siemens to spend six weeks inside factories in Nuremberg, Germany. Absorbing the sonic landscapes and recording sounds on site, she eventually devised a piece, "EWA7," performed inside a vast factory space, incorporating crane operators, sheet metal and kitchen appliances alongside traditional instruments, with a deafening safety alarm buzzer was used as a stop signal. No doubt the performance was a nightmarish home to the everyday buzzing, whirring, yet somehow exotic racket which Ms Gosfield and herself are lucky enough not to endure as our working environment.

The album presents a studio-based version of "EWA7," with factory sounds catalogued on Gosfield's sampling keyboard. Guitarist Reger Kleer and four percussionists are joined briefly by Mike Mon on electronics. This is followed by the shorter site track, a further excavation of the Nuremberg factories, scored for two quartets, string and percussion.

The epic sweep and almost psychedelic ambition of the sound is first recalled Goodspeed You Black Emperor!, Episodes of mistletoe and percussive patterning pay their respects to metal-punching machines and found factory objects. But the ferocious metal bashing and horns, heavy-handed rhythms begin to pall. Gosfield is a laid initial mind, and tends to evoke industrial complexity by having a percussionist hit a metal object as hard as possible, then a metal pipe, or a big drum, but too often with maximum force. Takahashi's 1812 Overture with cannons comes to mind.

This literal and heroic approach continues in the title track, where the strings hit manfully to provide equivalents of machine noise – suddenly I see a row of eager mine artists down a factory production line. In these days of squeaky clean robots and fuzzy logic, heavy manufacturing seems quaintly out, almost an endangered species in Britain at least, a country awash with heritage museums, each with its own noisy installation. Gosfield links sonic distance from her subject, let alone social comment, and seeks to celebrate the awesome force of machinery by hitting things very hard. It is there also a machine agenda, a composer determined to escape the effete concert hall and produce work robust enough to stand up inside the Siemens workshop? Nothing wrong with that, but the results are oddly impersonal, and only convey in patches the poetry that Gosfield clearly found in Nuremberg.

SUSIE IBARRA TRIO SONGBIRD SUITE TADPOLE CIRCLES 2 CD

by BILL SCHOMAKER

Radiance, the 1999 album by percussionist Susie Ibarra's first two with violinist Charles Burnham and pianist Cooper-Moore, had its

strong points, but was inconclusive as to the long-term prospects for her ensemble concept and compositions. Songbird Suite is sufficiently more compelling upon first hearing to prompt closer scrutiny of the two discs. Two generalisations can be made quickly: Ibarra has matured as a composer, and she has found collaborators in violinist Jennifer Choi and keyboardist Craig Taborn, who are arguably better suited to the unfolding trajectory of her music.

Ibarra has not dispensed with the strategic placement of bright themes and ebullient rhythms, which in large measure allowed Radiance to live up to its name. But, on Songbird Suite, these elements are pushed farther to the margins. "Blair" is a buoyant opener, with a searing waltz line propelled by Latin-trumpet piano and dancing brushwork. "Passing Clouds" glides on a midtempo, vimp-anchored groove, above which Choi's sweet, high notes and twills float like a kite, closing the proceedings with a quietly carefree vibe.

However, the new facets of Ibarra's music are most readily apparent in the bulk of the programme. Just as Cooper-Moore's help and homestead instruments extended the palette of Ibarra's first trio in the direction of indigenous music, Taborn's samples and electronics – buttressed by Ibarra's laptop warily on three pivotal tracks – pulls her music into more abstract realms, particularly on the otherworldly "Since No 2". Ibarra is also aware in the minimal scripting of pieces like the suspenseful, textured "Dance No 3".

Nested in the middle of the programme is "Immersion", a simple, delicate melody progressively lugged at by Ibarra's ground-leveling, marinated tones and Choi's, Taborn's elongated aspeigos and Cymbal's yearning glisses and tentative pascals. It lays out the chemistry within Ibarra's trio in transparent terms. Each player contributes a part that is equal in its need of the others to create the whole, a fine premise for an ensemble.

JECK/YOSHIMIDE/TETREAULT INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE #1 AUDIOSPHERE ASPI CD

by JEROME MAUNSELL

Coming on Brussels from the UK, Japan and Canada, three turnabout masters join forces on this extraordinarily assured and coherent 27-minute live improvisation, recorded in July 2000. The most immediately strange thing about it is how rarely they hear the sound of vinyl and needles. Indeed, much of it is closer in spirit to contemporary electronics and laptop improvisation. Some harsh elements of where these noises are sounded do crop up in the form of intermittent scratching and wisped textures, but these few are so rigorously controlled that they come as little a jolt. The array of loops and sounds on offer here makes you want to chuck out your computer and invest in a bettered old Denon – or, as Philip Jeck once famously did, 180 of them.

Judging from their differing approaches to deck manipulation, presumably Jeck supplies the many quasi loops that form the bedrock to Invisible Architecture, a whole series of shifting textures and large landscapes. The signature mews of Martin Tétreault and Dharma Yoshimide, meanwhile, are ever-present. In recent years, they have both gone beyond used turntables as

a hands-on, primitive form of sampler for jagged musical quotation, and have fashioned a pure approach. Delving into the guts of their instruments, using everything from exposed records to the whir and hum of the belt drive, they have unearthed a whole heap of fresh sonic material. While virtuosos Hiroko Oka take some collage, jumpcuts and density to new heights, Jeck, Yoshimide and Tétreault are forming a divergent, organic aesthetic.

First, speckled Ambient washes open the piece, redolent of early childhood attentions and confessions to Boards Of Canada. Analogue oscillations peer through, along with something like the squeaking of boots rubbing against a rug. With an organic, swelling pace, we then charge through percussive thumps and match fizzes, insectile swarms, roughly chugging trains, delayed vocal snippets, bouts of machine noise, rusty guitar licks, squealing drones, pastoral flutes, bashing feedback and the occasional spasm of sped-up vinyl. Gregorian chants over a whole blast of warped noise form a climax, before things end on an uneasy note with interrupted orchestral stabs punctuating an increasingly disturbing silence.

L STINKBUG THE ALLURE OF ROADSIDE CURIOUS STARGAZER FURNITURE CD 18 CD

ALEX DE GRASSI & GE STINSON SHORTWAVE POSTCARD AUSTRIAN RECORD COAST CD

by ALAN CUMMINGS

Two fascinating blasts of creative energy from the West Coast based guitarist Ge Stinson. Part of Los Angeles' lively but still relatively unheated New Music scene, Stinson's name has been obscured by the late Eric Clapton's Richard Greenman and Nirvana Galt until the release of a jaw-dropping retrospective on Ecstatic Peace a few years back. That disc showcased one of Stinson's multifaceted projects, including Stinkbug, to enlightening effect. These two latest outings fill us in on what Stinson has been up to since.

The "infectious composer" quartet L Stinkbug are the master proposition of the two, displaying an irresistible compulsion to volume, distortion and noise. With Nels Cline joining Stinson as silent on prepared guitar and heavy processing, the group fearlessly sprawl out in classic rock-improvising King Creamly mode. On the opening track, Some Nuts-styled expressive atmospheres shade into a seriously bass-heavy storm that could easily be a Larks Tongues outtake. The group's obvious virtuosity also echoes that of Frapp and co. Drummer Scott Amendia keeps the lengthy, segmented pieces constantly moving, while bassist Stuart Leebing matches Stinson in inventive dynamics. Stinson and Cline may rise the occasional grime with a pat jazz lick or roadrunner-laid Prog solo, but in general the group dynamic is strong enough to banish any individual grandstanding.

The duo with acclaimed English-style steel string guitarist Alex De Grassi had the alarming possibility of turning into a nostalgia trip down Memory Lane to Windham Hill (Stinson was a founding member of the label's twirling world fusion group Shadowfax). Thankfully, Stinson is older and wiser now, and his previous live gigs De Grassi: out of his elegantly meditative torpor,

Stinson sticks to his usual electric guitars and "implements", providing a variety of beeping background washes over the De Grassi layers surprisingly free-sounding, fingerpicked acoustic lines. The pieces are short and thematically concise, exploring a single mood under onomatopoeic titles like "Map Of The Night" and "Sister Morning". Stinson's tone has always had a riverbank blues edge, and in conjunction with De Grassi's picking it is used here to mesmerise effect, conjuring up intensely vivid and desecrated spaces perfect for some Lynchian desert nightmare. "Robot Show" is a fine example, with Stinson blurring high, subterranean, phased notes into each other with perfect control, as De Grassi glazes away elegantly, his strings stopping loosely against a motor id. This fine set brings your expectations of both players and is all the better for it.

LITTLE AXE HARD GRIND ON U SOUND 1001 CD

by BEN WATSON

Skip McDonald's Little Axe project was launched eight years ago, and the guitarist is still using bassist Doug Welsh and drummer Keith Le Blanc. These musicians were the house band at Bluebird Records in the early 80s, and therefore almost singlehandedly invented the new funky beat known as rap. Their decision to work with England's Adrian Sherwood in radical post-punk groups like Mark Stewart's Madcat and Blackhead was an inspiring example of bucking the pop/cash-in imperative to create a heavy alternative. Their releases came wrapped in magnets and messages that suggest a revolutionary vibe.

In a recent tape photo of his influences, Sherwood collected "a blues inflection" (referring to such blues records for samples) (many supplied by The Wire's own Steve Barker), the group play a caressing brand of Ambient funk-blues, full of sophisticated stereo cross fades and echoic lines: a velvet background for the gritty voices and twangy guitars of bluesmen from the past. The youth of today are admonished for not understanding the deep message of the blues, while at the same time the hi-tech music seeks to suck them into McDonald's camp.

The McDonald-Welsh-LeBlanc trio is a formidable team, and occasionally the flexing muscle of the music hits at the sheer power they could deliver. However, the appropriation of blues voices from the past also has disturbing similarities to the "voodoo chat" used in advertisements for Southern Comfort. As one of the old blues voices put it on "Blues Story 1": "I found out it's the best way for a person to be just what you are, it's no use trying to pretend be one thing and being another?" Does this recent session mean really know the "deaf of blues poverty and pain"? The interview continues, "I try and play what the people like." "I don't take of things, this record has everything tied up."

With its retro pace, nostalgic style guitar and bittersweet quality vocal, "Dark As The Night" is remarkably similar to The KLF's Chill Out album. However, the KLF added something guitar and strings that we all desire. Hard Grind is not just too close to the real thing, feedback guitars to avoid the heat of a coffee-table book approach to its sources.

Soundcheck

KAFFE MATTHEWS & ANDY MOOR LOCKS

UNUSUALLY COOL CD

KAFFE MATTHEWS ZEVENDE MIXER: STILL A SLAPPER

MOORE MOOT 2013*

BY CLIVE BELL

A follow-up to last year's *Burlesque Slapes*, *Locks* pairs Andy Moor, guitarist with *Outcast* avant-rockers The Ex, with live converts' Kaffe Matthews. Matthews, in what I take to be a display of virtuoso PowerBooker, processes

Moor's sound and throws it back to him in a sequence of 16 improvisations. This can result in Moor snarling out a punky guitar solo over loops audibly derived from his playing. Unfortunately, 'loopy' occasionally sets in, where we sense we are condemned to several minutes' repetition of one bit of guitar. More attractive is the musical decay of "AK-47 MH", or the atmosphere "White Is Edward Charles?", the latter recorded live at Instant Chavris in Paris. My favourite moments are actually the hard-edged jumps to the next track, sound transitions which don't occur in the pieces themselves. Several tracks deliberately avoid development.

It's pleasant, in an edgy, slightly abrasive manner, but it's not enough. There's a whiff of complacency, a sense that the musicians, having mastered the technology, are putting their feet up rather than challenging themselves. And the disc looks pretty.

For more compelling is Kaffe Matthews's solo *Steel A Slapper*, four pieces on 7" vinyl which transcend the jangle tale to offer the best minimal electronics I've heard in ages. The opening and closing tracks just lie there and glow, like a jewel on velvet. A howling, almost liquid sound, it gleams as if static, but in fact is steadily developing. The second track pulses

gently, conjuring up a lighthouse at sea, and a distant boat chugging past. A rich bottom end adds warmth and depth to the picture. "Slapper" features a crackling rhythm maybe derived from vinyl surface noise. This is very confident handling of sparse materials, generating an austere but highly attractive music.

MIMEO & JOHN TILBURY THE HANDS OF CARAVAGGIO CRISTALLINE CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Karl Rowe, founder member of Mimeo (Music In Movement Electronic Orchestra), coaches his

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, raved, reviled



Bangs and whoppers: Arthur Russell, Take Thuganess

As a rule of thumb, the greater the spread of silence, the more it is permitted. That some silences are better than others is also undeniable, and they don't come more eroding than the several posed in *Meeting At Off Site Vol One* (Riser CD/Impvised Music From Japan IN501 CD). Off Site is a small gallery one step from the live communications hub of Shijuku, where no-input minus board player Toshimaru Nakamura and turntablist/guitarist Tetu Aoyama create monthly explorations of sound pitched at the threshold of audibility. The duo mostly appear in small units completed by one or two Off Site regulars, among them vocalist Ami Yoshida, Orono Yoshida (here on guitar), Brett Lamer (on ukulele) and snowsampler Sanki M, or guests such as Thomas Arkenst on sax, MD player Mihai Harnis and synthesist Bruno Mellier. Backlist guitars like Sugimoto is also a valued companion, generating heart-pounding drama out of his inclination to break silence. What distinguishes the Off Site series is how players don't so much harmonize with the environment as sound out loose, lean arrangements with the available 'background scenery'. In his notes, Nakamura describes how the level of these performances is "often as feeble that it welcomes into the music noises from outside, such as... the wooden corridors of people calling beware of fire as they walk through the neighbourhood". It's said that listeners later seek out the CD to hear what they say. Now, that's what I call a cliffhanger (RK).

Issued to coincide with a 1997 exhibit of the sculptor's work at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, *Brancusi Et La Musique* (Centre George Pompidou/Dacery Music DMCGP97013D CD) was compiled from the records found in Constantin Brancusi's studio at the time of the Romanian sculptor's death. The 18 tracks, culled from original vinyl sources, comprise the ultimate miscage from the last half of the 20th century. A

comparative disc issued by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Music, Paris & Brancusi, heavily featured Parisian cabaret music to evoke the urban environment inhabited by the artist. The archival selections which constitute *Brancusi Et La Musique* are infinitely preferable, a crazy quilt of Balkinese gamelan, Hungarian, gypsy fiddle tunes and an excerpt from a Busby Berkeley-choreographed musical, the latter introduced with impressive gangster cool by actor George Felt. Beyond mere eclecticism is a burning performance by Turkish singer Bülent Ersoy, backed by a film orchestra swathed in a canyon's worth of reverb. A Stravinsky piano duet nestles snugly between Ludovico's interpretation of a Bach keyboard fantasia and a gypsy zigeane as fiddled (with admirable lack of restraint) by Herud Merhau. Brancusi's connection to America's Jazz Age is legit as affirmed by selections from Count Basie, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. The rebel impulse, by a contemporary of Picasso and Apollinaire, to blast raucous jazz in a roaring 20s European style seems scarcely different than the No Wave soundtrack preferred by later Manhattan's art community a half century later. But then one encounters the "Brancusi/Huber" jaw snap nectar and the charming Swiss American rendition of "Mazurka", for each of its revelations, Brancusi Et La Musique offers some new mysteries (RK).

Compiled by two of Britain's leading disco scholars, Jody Negro and Sean P, *Disco Not Dice 2* (Strut STRU002 CD/2XLP) follows 2000's groundbreaking first volume with an equally quirky, if not quite as weird guide, selection of disco oddities. You'd be forgiven for thinking that the late 70s/early 80s post-punk/post-funk thing had been thoroughly picked clean for all the recent compilations, but this is far from Bloodstains Over The Paradise Garage. Sean P turns in a nifty re-edit of Car's "Speedzone" (from 1979's *Can*), streamlining the

track down to its John McLaughlin and Michael Henderson skipping on hi-hats' essential. Hardcore avantists will also be satisfied by Arthur Russell's remarkably weird "Let's Go Swimming" and Material's "Cigun", while hardcore spotters will marvel at Connie Case & King Sporty's "Get Over", an ultra-obscure New York classic from Koolha Records, and Barry White's dubby saxy, "Sung". For everyone else, there's Last Black Eddy Grant, The Clash and Alexander Robotack. Post-punk's not dead... yet (PS).

The cover of *Artiklen Hystoric: Suomen-Amerikkalaiset Suomalaiset (Artic Hysteric: Early Finnish Abo Gardsmen)* (Love Records U035 CD) should let you know what you're in for immediately: some pretty young Finnish things in black leotards emerge from coffins as a black faced and mustachioed sageophone blares and waits to air (shockingly live!) audience of bemused longhairs. Aside from the really lame disco parodies (three guys belching into a microphone) and shockingly awful Prog blues, there's actually some pretty interesting electronic music of late 60s vintage from Finnish legend Erkki Kluuneman, some wild free jazz with the saxophone sounding like a cross between Roland Kirk and Stan Stewart, an underground ensemble called the Spasm, who are reminiscent of what The No Neck Blues Band would have sounded like if they had been based on rendezee jeep, recorded in a sauna hut and were dedicated to challenging obscenity laws, an aural document of veto-counting during the 1962 presidential election which you will soon surmise was won by someone called Reagan, and what I imagine is a rather funny ensemble on Nianon's weed, Spio Agnew (PS). Who knows if today's fearless experimenters and postists will provide as much entertainment to next generation's cave diggers and thrift store scroungers as the 60s and 70s have done to ours, but if they do, then *[Wing Application]* (Tigerbeat6 Meow039 CD) will

surely rank as the bicentennial Budweiser beer mug of Mood. Indigo of the 21st century. The glitch may have been declared dead by more than one participant on this compilation, but here is that digital blower in all its glory, reheated and speeded up. By turns punky, hopeful and simply formal, *[Wing Application]* articulates that strange cultural moment caught between alienation and a headlong rush to embrace the new, four kids, however, will think it's just damn funny (PS).

Choosing the movement of contemporary Jamaican music from riddimology into reggae via a series of shrewd licensing deals, Trojan's *Tighten Up* series began by aiming at London's Caribbean working class ex-pats and ended up becoming the musical emblem of the world's so-called soulheads. These probabilities surrounded emerging post-billy music and reggae became marked as some sort of flash in the pan sub-Melvin distance for those seemingly without the wit to engage in higher forms of sonic discourse. Dave Hendry witnessed all this from the inside and his scolding of the events in the sleeve notes of *Tighten Up - The Best Of Trojan Reggae Classics 1968-1974* (Trojan TROJ00111 2XCD) is enough to precipitate collective gutt trips in today's Rhythmhead. UK media establishment as today's reggae continues to remain on the outside. This retrospective set, featuring 52 tracks selected from the series's eight albums, is a preface for the rescue of each individual album, all to be accompanied by contemporary bonus tracks. The highlights are too numerous to list, but suffice to say that the trip from *The Untouchables* Scratch-produred title track via King Short's revolutionary "Herbain Shuffie" and Bob Andy's immortal "You Gotta Know" to the righteous Johnny Clarke's "Nause Shall Escape The Judgement" is both a joyous and instructive experience. (SB) [Reviewed by Steve Barker, Richard Henderson, Bob Kopf and Peter Shapiro]

description of the group's dynamic in terms of class struggle, or what he calls the "dialectical tension between the world of scarcity" (represented by the "group animals" members of the ensemble) to "the one of plenty" (represented by the "Powerback too"). Of course, Rowe might see this as healthy but also as inherently tactical. The disciplines of improvisation and electronics are brought head to head in a battle for supremacy or, at least, cementation of "instruments coded in history" by the forces of C21 technology. It is a fascinating strategy, and the Hands Of Caravaggio represents its latest theater of engagement.

The pan-European Mimeo's 11 members (musica Christian Fennel on this occasion) are involved in many other musical affiliations. After their 24-hour performance at Musique Actuelle in Vandoeuvre in May 2000, they have not had an opportunity to reunite until the recorded festival performance a year later in Belgium.

The conductor is Phil Dumont (violin/electronics), Cor Fuhler (piano/keyboards/electronics), Thomas Lehn (analogue synthesizer), Kalle Mathews (computer/violin), Jérôme Notheur (electronic/acoustic devices), Gert-Jan Pans (electronics/audio/TV), Peter Rehberg (computer), Keith Rowe (tubelamp guitar), Marcus Schmickler (computer/synthesizer), Rabel Surral (guitar/electronics) and Markus Wetstein (amplified objects). Not content with the infinite variation already on offer, here Mimeo also bring in Rowe's AMM pianist John Tibbitt, but with the constraint on his playing of it being instantly retrieved from inside the piano and manipulated in real time by Cor Fuhler. The potential power of the piano to manipulate, synthesize or manipulate any conceivable sound, either individually or collectively, is truly awe inspiring in its universality. But the ability to self-destruct in a confusion of power to signal notes and snowflake distortions is also a distinct possibility. The ensemble not only contend with the potential tactical struggle Rowe describes, they also willingly embrace the inherent, catalytic quality within its structure. This is a dangerous performance scenario fraught with risk: total conditions, in other words, for wholly original music making.

Being subject to instant sound manipulation must be, for Tibbitt, a physically disorienting experience akin to intellectual rape. He apparently squeals as he took his place, "in one second you guys can eliminate me and end for all." It's a pain a second, he dropped the reply. Tibbitt not only transcends the hands of benevolent interference but also recognizes his performance triumphantly within this context. He is audibly panicky and concise, constantly reading and repositioning himself within the electronic forest of sound enveloping and manipulating him. He accepts that Mimeo work as a collective, and individual performances do not gain priority. Finding room for constructive participation, he takes his rightful place within the composition. What is important here is the ability of 11 fine musicians to suspend ego for the common good, and create sound patterns that invest the piece with a depth of field that never loses its focus.

Rowe and Tibbitt go back almost three decades as partners in AMM. Rowe has metamorphosed, in AMM, from a physical finger and boundaries of the guitar but also the

collective unconsciousness of the instrument in proximity Tibbitt, on the other hand, is recovered" for his interpretations of the music of Caroline Caslow and John Cage. Here, in microcosm, is Rowe's dichotomy: the "disfunctional garbage collectors" juxtaposed against the weighty history of the romantic "analogue spectrum." Furthermore, the Hands Of Caravaggio is described as a concerto which, in Latin, can be construed as "to contend, to dispute" or "in its ultimate form as 'to arrange, to agree'." That this performance not only manages to resolve all its tactical, artistic and linguistic issues but also creates in the process a landmark work of great significance, beauty and integrity is nothing short of a miracle.

NURSE WITH WOUND THE MAN WITH THE WOMAN FACE

UNITED STATES: UTOPIA CD
BY JIM HAYNES

Within the ongoing catalogue of his Nurse With Wound recordings, Steven Stapleton may be one of the few musicians who, first, truly understands and second, accurately employs Andre Breton's definitions of Surrealism, in particular as "psychic automatism in its pure state by which one proposes to express — verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner — the actual functioning of thought." (Surrealism is) dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern." Stapleton has so enriched himself within Breton's agenda that Nurse With Wound strive to bridge contemporary recording techniques with the original Surrealist fascination with creating imagery as manifestations of Freudian freudism. Thus, through all of Nurse With Wound's sonic invasions, puns and nightmares, Stapleton's version of Surrealism might well be how Breton heard it in his own head.

Discouraging collaborations with Aranos and Current 93, The Man With The Woman Face is the first proper Nurse With Wound album in almost two years. Working exclusively with engineer extraordinaire Colin Potter for this recording, Stapleton returns to one of his signature working methods exemplified in his earlier masterpieces Homotopy For Meme and Spiral Island, whereby he purposefully disturbs the typical perception of commonplace sounds through juxtaposition, tracked out effects and repetition. On these albums, Stapleton intellectualized the sound of gears, disembodied voices and shattered glass in order to shape them towards the horrific, the psycho-sexual, or the sublime, but for The Man With The Woman Face, Stapleton pursues the pathetic nature of a joke gone awry, either because it was delivered poorly or simply because it wasn't funny. Stapleton and Potter craft a complex web of melancholy feedback tones that pulse and flicker behind the loosely collaged sound effects often found punctuating the bawdy jokes of 1950s music comic Spike Jones. There's the vibrated bang of a big spring, the glissando of a slide whistle, a couple of notes on a xylophone, replaced tribal rhythms and lots of unspecified whirring. And just to complicate any dissonant meaning, the album features tribally at its core with two brief explosions of lyrical rock propulsion, much like early Sue Cry Girls. Stapleton's interest isn't so

much in elucidating the failed joke, as focusing on that moment of antisocialist and consternation when the jokester recognizes he has flubbed it. I think Breton would be pleased.

PITA GET DOWN MEGO 040 LP

FENNESZ/O'ROURKE/
REHBERG
THE RETURN OF FENN O'BERG
MEGO 064 CD/LP

DACM SHOWROOM DUMMIES MEGO 090 CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

It's hard to believe that Mego has been around for eight years now. These three albums from the Austrian digital roughhouse take its output beyond the 30 mark. The question, as the imprint gets larger is the doubt, is whether the punky file-sampling of its core aesthetic is durable. On the evidence of these three releases, it remains a force to be reckoned with.

Label boss Peter Rehberg plays on all three. Get Down is his alter ego Pita's vinyl-only follow-up to 1999's Get Out. Each of the nine clipped pieces spliced over the album's 30 minutes is a single idea expressed by means of Pita's typically abrasive timbres reminiscent to anarchic dance music, like "Aod Uid", are heavyhanded and less persuasive than the more oblique works, which show ill-behaved swatches of sound right under the listener's face. His best work has a forward-rushing energy that's scornful of the appearance of craft or polish. With so much unrepentant digital handiwork festering around, Rehberg succeeds in holding on to a derivative edge without having to narrow his sound palette to an endlessly reproducible signature. There's nothing as harsh as Rehberg & Bauer's recent Touch release, Pita, but it's pleasantly prickly listening all the same.

Occurring live performances of the trio Rehberg shares with Christian Fennel and Jim O'Rourke, the Fenn O'berg album is a crunchy mass of interlocking voices. The three alternate pass the baton and fight it out, and the end result is often densely textured, though rarely to the point of congestion. Again, the work is less attractive when citation intrudes, like, for example, where a sugary string sample rises to the surface. The way the third piece shifts from Fennel's confounding pop intonations to a sudden twanging tone is typical of the album's precocious volatility of forces. The latter can never quite relax because the music always feels on the point of scorching off elsewhere. The three succeed in working as a surprisingly cohesive unit. Despite the huge diversity of sound sources, their common purpose everywhere shades the music. Fenn O'berg makes redundant the job that such music is somehow "easy" because the technical side can be relatively undemanding. Ears caught for something too.

Rehberg's DACM release appears to be audio created for a dance project. On these mostly compact works, Rehberg makes more use of repetition. Each condensed piece sketches and sustains what is usually a brief soundworld. Rehberg's attraction to aural being is again to the fore, perhaps a side effect of the pulverization of the sounds in the processing. And once again the album falls down when it

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Soundcheck

brings in material with a strong generic stamp. However, Reiberg generally morphs any source sounds beyond recognition, generating thick clusters of sonic snot as he goes along. Haywire bursts lend structural coherence, while flickering beats of snare appear from every angle. Reiberg knows that there's a kind of ephemerality to this music, even as the deceptively artless mood he brings to it makes it feel all the more worth hanging onto.

TAYLOR SAVVY LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

WITTYO K703256CD

By BEN BORN-WEIK

As one of Kitty-Yo's Canadian trimmets, Taylor Savvy's debut holds its own in the company of Peaches and Gonzalez, with whom he has spent much of the last year touring. He sings sleazy, saccharine and sentimental pop lyrics that sound like a hybrid of Digital Underground's

Humpy Hump with Dean Martin. Songs basically consist of one or two phrases repeated over and over, making the album a tutorial in advanced shower singing technique. Savvy's method sounds like his sampler has broken down, forcing him to sing his favorite cassettes over synthpop clichés. And he's perfectly content to keep going round in circles as, with repetition, the phrases morph from statements to slogans. The apparent simplicity of his formula belies

the subtlety with which he deconstructs the formal structure of generic pop songs. Lyrically, he argues, there is never any progression, just the repetition of loving words over a down and dirty groove, or dance and party anthems. Arrangements are similarly fragmented into distinct elements. On the rare occasions when he eschews straight repetition, the elements fall in the wrong place, a song finishes on a bridge, a guitar solo shocks on the track's main chords. In

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes

Remasters in fat-swing: Akne Refelson, Nic Clayton

The Chains' *Rears In The Makeup/Remix* (Nipper K16 7") is a fairly perplexing single by any standard. The A-side is... what? A hideously Beatles-style studio pop confection with banal lyrics about a sad, sad Christmas. The flipside is a "remix" by Kage, Igilj Brandstadts Norwegian appropriation. All that this remix really salvages from its source is some of the heavenly vocal waxes, which are used as a quiet backdrop for a rumbling sleep-punk instrumental of purely Norwegian descent. (BC)

If you really want to scratch your head, attempt to lay your hands on **Cob Ru And His Predatory Wasp Orchestra's** *Soko Spacek* (Helicopter H12 7"). No information on it has been forthcoming through any of the regular channels, so you'll have to figure it out yourself. Tough to say whether it's a split 45 or not; the cover doesn't indicate that it is, but the covers are widely different. The first side has lo-fi polly-mouth folk inventions by what sounds to be a very troubled adolescent (perhaps W Cob Ru himself). The flipside is a most pleasantly anemic racket, in what seems to be imagined as a jazz format (although it sounds more like Nautilus Atomic or something). What all this means is anyone's guess. What it sounds like is a very special kind of genre. (BC)

In April 2001, the great Swedish electronic music pioneer **Sten Hansson** was attacked by his heart. He was hospitalized for a week, during which time several ultrasonic examinations were performed. The soundtrack generated by these exams, and other recordings made of his heart during his hospital stay, serve as the basis material for *My Gallopang Heart* (Svylgjen P5P1001 7"). Without this context, the music is excellent concrete composition, listened to with this in mind, it assumes the shape of an audio anti-battle between life and death. (BC)

It's hard for me to imagine a better format for music than a set of five matched, short, 100-second discs. It is a format so infrequently attempted, however, that I had all but given up hope of ever seeing it. Thankfully, the always-

writing Finnish collective, **Kamailiselt Ystävät** (whose death and mutation have been rumored, apparently falsely), has stepped up and given us what we all need with *Lumotus Kamikpunkit* (Celebrate Psi Phenomenon NO Number 2X8"): two 8" letter-cut picture discs, teeming with out of focus, dark woodland folk music, chattering and churring with almost Obi-wan like nature. Like the group's previous releases, this one features like a 3x leadership, supervised above the mounds of the Perth County Conspiracy at their most drug consumed. It is a worthy and beautiful thing for each and every known sense to behold. (BC)

And yet another fine blast from the woods of Finland: **Pylon** are a duo who combine the lost campfire ethos of some of their peers with a ruckus similar to some of the neo-no waveers currently making the rounds. How they arrived at the synaptic mix contained on *Keep Your Melody Hands On My Bumping Groins* (Bang Beep BONG25 7") is something that I am unable to explain, but it is equally difficult to ignore the strange music-laden brevity of this platter. The sleeve claims that it is Pylon's fifth "album," but this is presumed to be a canard. It is very unlikely that a group this odd could have escaped attention for four entire releases. (BC)

Ondica/Brother It's Anthony Of The *MoonyChild Of The Sun* (Jagguar JAG31 7") is a split single, used to commemorate a tour that hasn't yet been passed near my house. Ondica are a psychedelic group from Brooklyn, New York, whose output is nicely neo-psy. Their track is supposedly a meditation on an unreleased Grateful Dead LP, but the way it combines slow warped harmonic vocals and beautifully weaved guitar feedback hardly recalls Bay Area classicism (in even its most adventurous guise). On the flip, Ondica back up the always majestic Brother JJ for a more wilfully tooth-beat chomp at the end, burying an unusual hot rod/drug pop style merger under a few feet of guitar crunch. (BC)

Wendichgates are a Danish duo whose work traditionally mixes deconstructs snippets of recognizable instruments, inimitable rumbles

and power electronics. The letter-cut *Six Silver Bellets* (KIT 04 7") does not combine these elements (as they did on previous releases) so much as it slides between them, sounding alternately like Mesmer warming up before a gig, a distorted tape piece based on Kraftwerk's "Autobahn" sound effects, and MSBR drilling for teeth as an echo chamber. (BC)

Wolf Eyes are one of the units central to the Midwest underground progressive noise scene. By using strictly electronic approaches to discordant form dynamics (as opposed to, say, Universal Indians' more organic tactics), Wolf Eyes could rightfully lay claim to be semi-progenitors of some of the wender electronic improv being done in the sub-underground US these days. The extremely saugally letter-cut *Cut The Pig/Powder 13M* (American Tapes AM16B 7") — all power tools, cheap effects and beer — is another feather in the group's already chicken-tail. And it sounds great at all known speeds, too, so come on down! (BC)

Since August 2001, **Full Swing** (aka Stephen Mathew) has released a series of five 10" on Kit Clayton's Ortholog Musikk label (Ortholog Musikk ORTH 05 1-05 10"). Obviously it is a remix project of fine artists including Antares, Ekhardth Ehlers, Laika, Raumangstallung, Lo La Tergo, Alex Reibekus and Ortholog label founder Kit Clayton. However, instead of remaking a single track by dissembling all the parts and dealing with the dead narrative scope, these "edits" are tiny snippets of the original material massively blown up and looped to create something both specific and general. They are not so much remixes as attempts to reach a general conclusion about the conceptual and aural practices of the artists whose material Mathew reworks. For example, although Ortholog 10 107) lacks the signature lyricism and liquidity it is full of recognizably "Morelake" sounds and structures. It is what someone who has never heard Morelake might imagine they sound like if you gave a partial description of the music. Autoproses, D03 Edit (Ortholog Musikk

ORTHOS 2 107") is taken from a lack groove on the Autoproses remix album, meaning the source is already twice removed from what is usually signified by the name "Autoproses" (the flipside, "Autoproses, C 11 Edit", uses a stylus-cut loop from a blank piece of vinyl. It sounds like an Autoproses strategy, but which piece of blank vinyl was it? For the most part, the specificity of the original artist's digital language remains identifiable, but it has been translated into Mathew's understanding of each artist's particular grammar and ideas. (BB)

Daved & Jude/State Some Sentimental Jewellery (Unspliced Music 1 7") is a split single that pairs **Low's** sparse Country gospel with **Vibracathedral Orchestra's** kinetic instruments. "Daved & Jude" is nice enough, with Alex Sperhawk and Mimi Parker's twined vocals howling right behind the speakers while a dry tactile guitar is thrummed in the distance. Recorded by Records' Calvin Johnson at the Old Nordic studios in Olympia, the atmosphere of hushed cantata is only slightly maimed by Johnson's inappropriately clumsy interventions on melodica. "State Some Sentimental Jewellery" sees Vibracathedral's one-time wild tunnel sound beautifully upped to 24-track glory vs engineer Richard Formby (a one-time member of Spacemans 3 and Spectrum). It sounds like a high energy drink on Fairport Convention's "Marty Groves" with a swarm of Swarthick-style women lestering the entire orchestra and ranks as one of their finest entries to date. (CK)

Vibracathedral Orchestra also have a heavy-duty 7" on the great German Tauschacht label, *The One You Call The Ghost In/Blorg! Two* (Tonschicht 010 7"). While the A-side is a pretty whistle-led dig that crosses the open air improvisations of Tokyo's Ghost with Popol Vuh's Herzog soundtracks, side B is much more claustrophobic, with thumping drums and peaking guitars that recall the run-out of "All Tomorrow's Parties" as hijacked by five demotically ginning John Cale. (CK)

Reviewed by Ben Borthwick, Bryan Cole and David Keenan

normal circumstances, where clichés are camouflaged within a whole song packed with other meanings, the effect would be costly. But here repetition brings them to the point where they lose any hope of signifying anything, in the process making a whole other register of associations. He knows he only needs to sing the phrase, "I wanna be your man", because the entire genre is already so overdetermined. Confining the lyric to that one phrase, it finds its own space as the first line of a song, poem or letter so traumatic to write. Acting as pop's very own unconscious speaking, the backing singers eventually whisper, "Who you talking to Sissy?", leaving it unclear whether he is addressing anyone in particular, or just the hope of someone out there somewhere hearing him. Just as you don't go misreading this one from the heart, the following track, "She's Got It", puts your night with its dirty House beats and chant of "Big chicks is all I see but still your pussy surprises me"

A SMALL GOOD THING SLIM WESTERNS VOL II

LEAF SAWB CD
BY KEIN HOLLINGS

There have been almost soundtracks for non-existent movies brought out since West Coast Meep pioneers Beaver & Kause released their highly speculative documentary project back in the early 1970s to constitute a small musical sub-category in their own right. No study of this phenomenon would be complete, however, without a special mention of a Small Good Thing's Slim Westerns volume.

Originally released in 1994, Volume One introduced the listener to wandering outlaw Gary Melody, whose mythical adventures in the barren, haunted wilderness of the pulp Western are continued here, to the hardly sparsely accompanied of the wilderness guitars and drifting studio ambience of Andrew Hulme, in collaboration with Tom Fazzini and Mark Sedgwick. Together, they take the wide open splendour of John Ford's Monument Valley and the dry desert plains of Sergio Leone's grandiose horse operas, and populate them with half-gripped ghosts. The cheap grandeur of dime-store cowboy fiction is mixed with the kind of dark, disconcerting absurdities that only a Flannery O'Connor or a Richard Brautigan would understand. In fact, the latter even gets a namecheck in one of Volume II's closing compositions: a song based on a lasciviously repeated lyric (the only words clearly audible throughout the entire recording) from Fazzini, breathing through gitted teeth, asking whether an unheard train is "headin' south".

From the opening "Crap Dumpster" to the winning bandwagons on "Let's Get Rusted", this is a world in which men and machinery are both dwarfed by distance. Even the shy and misty-eyed waltz, "Solomon Dreams", feels like it seeped in from a separate universe. Awkward, handsomely presented and filled with the slim, sad-eyed melancholy which vast expanses of artificially created nature can bring out in its inhabitants, Slim Westerns Vol II also has a valdeycore feel. The mournful Marathi chants that echo throughout, especially on "A Mugly's Solitude" and the elegiac "The Sleep Of The Just", frame as a reminder that such grand, dusty fantasies may never really exist at all, except in the listener's imagination.

SMALL ROCKS CARBONATING

HOT AIR AIRBRRK009 CD
BY JULIAN COWLEY

Please disregard my review of Small Rocks in last month's issue. A reggae CD, unlabelled and unidentified, somehow found its way into the Carbonating sleeve. If anyone can identify the anonymous disc from my description, please let us know. So, what has Salted-bread musician Matt Wand, most widely known for his work with Stock,hausen & Walker, really been up to in his Small Rocks guise? On a previous Hot Air release, 21/2 Of Me! Music, he gave us "an infinite symphony for 12 self-propelled pocket game machines". On Carbonating, his openness to all kinds of electronically generated (or material results in a widely embracing kind of off-beat mutant techies that's calculatedly dismantled and filled with improbable collages.

Instead of chasing a line, Wand works the field with bits of peripheral action around a centre that keeps giving way. Again and again the music threatens to settle into regularity and drum towards some distant horizon, but Wand sabotages the beat trajectory, setting up strong rhythms then disrupting them with interludes, scatterings of aural detritus and sudden restless cuts of timbre. The thunderous thuds of "Rule Of Outlets", heavy with laghorn trumpeting, seem especially unstoppable, but Wand spins it up and scrambles the ingredients.

An antidote to stony-faced electroacoustic high seriousness, Carbonating displays a relish for irregularity and a taste for weirdy and kitsch sounds, which Wand salvages by using them against their own grain. It's busy music but it never grows messy or murky. The clash of dissimilar elements is ceaseless fun, but it's executed with considerable skill as well as a wry grin. Nothing gets lost here. Clearly its sense of randomness has been carefully planned.

JOHN STEVENS NO FEAR

H4 HEAD HPH01 CD
BY ANDY HAMILTON

In his recent interview (The Wire 218), Steve Seisenthal commented, "In a way the whole London scene is a tribute to John Stevens", citing his commitment to "vicious listening" over attention and his strong social conscience. Seisenthal is working on a Stevens Website which aims to include the whole rest of Search And Reflect, the drummer's website on how to become a better musician without practising for eight hours a day. If that sounds like a cop-out, it isn't. Stevens, who died in 1994, had an attractive mystical philosophy, and No Fear is an aptly titled little example of his tangible products.

It's good to have this example of the great drummer's work, to follow the recent Hello Goodbye an Ennema with Frodo Gjestad and Derek Bailey (The Wire 216), because Stevens' recorded legacy isn't as large as you might expect, considering the amount of performances he gave throughout his life. Maybe he didn't have the solo time-fuel of his peer: Phil Seaman, probably the greatest British jazz drummer, but the fecundity of his ideas, passionately expressed, was inspirational. On this 1977 date originally released by Spoolin, he drives Barry Guy on bass and Trevor Watts on alto.

Composers are by Stevens and Watts, whose tone is heightened and emotional. The drummer probably coined the phrase "feeling", referring to something like the "time no changes" approach of Miles Davis's later 60s groups, and also it is the title of one of his own units. And, indeed, most of the album is unapologetic feedback, notably the title track, which sets up an awesome display of how improvisation power with a rhythmic concept. An exception is the more subtle "The ID", still animated by Watts's piercing alto. The boy acoustic doesn't win prizes but the sound quality is transcendent by the tone's life-affirming music.

SUPER COLLIDER RAW DIGITS

RIDE RECORDS RIDE RRR00 CD
BY JEROME MAUNSLING

Jamie Lidell and Cristian Vogel's follow-up to their debut album, Head On, has been three years in the making. The time lag is partly down to the pair's changes of address – Lidell moved from Brighton to Berlin, while Vogel headed off to Barcelona – not to mention their own fiendish solo recording schedules, which have resulted in a string of separate releases on Warp, Novamute and Tieser offshoot Supernal. Perhaps the slow gestation of Raw Digits was just what they needed. Head On sounded like a great idea on paper, grafting glarily technod production values on to Lidell's strange ordering – a marriage of soul vox and electronics which could be seen as a brother counterpart to Lullia's first album for Reprieve, like Wesley. At times, though, the formula faltered and the structure showed a few unconvincing cracks. Under the distortion and odd transistor radio style FX, the plattered classic motifs and riffs of Lidell's vox seemed towards outright pastiche.

Where that record was all instant fix and no nourishment, Raw Digits has much more subtle dynamics. The vocals feel more fluid and better integrated with the production, which also is less jumpy throughout. They are also more affecting. Catchy hooks are lumped at less often, instead, on several tracks, Lidell uses his voice more like an instrument. Even so, at various points his contortions come over like an oddly synthetic amalgam of George Clinton, Steve Wonder, James Brown and Craig David (well, almost). Operer "Messagessomom" jets dense clouds of chorale ravel over odd, skipping beats and a refrain about "all the messages coming for you that you just can't decipher". "Bug Tracker" wigs out in a surprisingly sultry way with some neat, shimmering 70s-style keys, a sizzly electronic swoop of funky movie-samples, indistinct bass grumbles and some cavernous roars. Matthew Herbert guests on bass keyboard for the smooth, gentle "Greenly Reemerging", which isn't a patch on the narcotized R&B grooves, multitracked gurgles, eerie oscillators and woozy melodies of "Rodericars On The Rise".

TARTWATER NOT THE WHEEL

CRUSTY CRUSTY CD
BY KEIN HOLLINGS

Gathering together specially commissioned pieces for film and theatre projects, one-off compositions and compilation tracks, this Polish label release is a quiet restatement of Tartwater

New Albion



Lou Harrison NA117
Complete Harpsichord Works
in Historic and Experimental
Tunings
Linda Burman-Hall, keyboards



Cornelius Cardew NA116
We Sing For The Future!
Frederic Rozowski, piano



Stephen Vitiello NA115
Bright and Dusty Things
with Pauline Oliveros & David Toranzo



Stefano Scodanibbio NA119
Six Duos
with members of Arditi Quartet



Soundcheck

positions taken and advances made. Less a new album from the Berlin group than a summation of past explorations, *Trauma* blends Eastman and To Rococo Rot's Rainer Uppel in effective mood, tracing the first fortune of irregular melodies and a brief selection of short pieces that delicately intersperse songs with instrumental compositions, it also features some notable collaborations, particularly with Shrip Gumi on "Lost Stalker", pitching the rhythmic aspen of a telephone's dial tone with pinging guitar chords and chattering electronics, and Bertan Dörmel (of enigmatic duo Derail and Hufn) contributing spectral wobblephone to the mournful rumblings of "Expected". The music autism of *Trauma*'s lyrics continues to convey complex allusions in a deft throwaway style. "Plans," for example, enumerates a series of vast and improbable scenarios, including "The map of Africa/The mighty sail of Kennedy/Just where the hole had been..." over a quirky shuffling backdrop.

"I Want My Machinery To Disappear," a quietly dissonant piece, shifts through a series of moody tableaux, from the lyrical to the clunky over its four scant minutes, the madious dron of radio voices at its close being picked up on the fragile alias decay of "Under Green Ice." "The Garden" builds itself up into a quiet state of majesty over its short duration, while both the title track and "Repose in the Sun" perform small wonders in the time allotted there. There is also a tentative hesitancy about these compositions; they have the transparent appeal of imitate pen and wash studies for some larger project that is impossible to realize, as on the ample transformations of "Host/Body/Host." Seemingly incomplete and yet sufficient in themselves, these are compositions that hint at, and suggest, something greater still. Continue to expect the extraordinary Tawler obviously so.

TO LIVE AND SHAVE IN LA THE WIGMAKER IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WILLIAMSBURG MENLO PARK, MPT020 3XCD

BY DAVID KEDVAN

Tracing the waned contours of Tom Smith aka OM Myths' underground 'career' is a task that only the hardest of record collectors would even bother to attempt. He's been active on the furthest fringes of antiaural rock 'n' roll since the mid-70s, playing out in Boav (of *Allegiance* a young Michael Stipe) and Beach Of Immortality and going on to guest with Don Fleming's godlike conceptualists the Velvet Monkeys and New Line Pussy Gators, with whom he played small percussion early on. However, to live and Shave In LA, in reality based in Miami, were the fullest realization of his aesthetic. Throughout the 90s, *TLASIA* burned bright, bashing and clumsily resembling rock n' roll on titles like "For Carrot, Fat Ass and Peter Cross vs Peter Christopherson." They finally split in 2000, in the space spawning countless monomaniacal splinter groups with names like *To Live And Shave In LA2* and *Born In East LA*. Five years in the making, *The Wigmaker In Eighteenth Century Williamsburg* stands as a career summation of sorts. It's also the most fully realized *TLASIA* release, two discs of hectic work *TLASIA*, *Tenaka*-scale total obliteration, concrete tape work and noise jams. Here Smith and group

members Rüdiger and Ben Wolfert are joined by a dazing "who the hell's who" of the underground's live ensembles, including members of Black Decay and Chicago's Lake Of Dacula. The songs are relentless from the kick-off, with great shards of scolding electronics and squealing, unadorned beats layered with great composition-based analog blocks of soupy samples and Smith's hysterically quavering vocals. It sounds like it has taken five years to put together, with a level of technical depth that's disorienting, and an organizational logic to the tracks that only fully manifests itself after a few listens. In terms of highly structured noise, there are few comparisons. Merzbow and Whitehouse are the closest reference points, yet *TLASIA*'s tactics are more self-consciously irrelevant, their aesthetic more firmly entrenched in trash rock culture. At their most ascetic, their sound closer to The Stooges of *LA Blues*. Smith's poetry also dominates *The Wigmaker*... from any potential pretensions, with lines like "Flaming out of your stomach and Aviva/Mythling the prism of an aphorism/Heard his Dublin days of rap proposals/Failed to double glass the count-slow-suck" ascending like it came from some previously unearthed hermetic treasure. Across two CDs the tracks do tend to blur into monochrome but, judiciously dipped into, *The Wigmaker*... provides one of the finest blueprints for the reconformation of atonal noise with the snotty world of rock 'n' roll.

DAVID TUDOR & JOHN CAGE RAINFOREST II, MUREAU NEW WORLD 80640 3XCD JOHN CAGE/ULRICH KRIEGER A CASE OF SAXOPHONES VOL. I MODE 14 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

John Cage had a beautiful voice. He talked in a luxuriously unpolished, utterly relaxed Los Angeles drawl. His singing, of which there is over 90 minutes on New World's double CD, was playful and exploratory. Here Cage is using his lower range, sounding deliberately older than his 60 years, rather like a Japanese neighbourhood poet. Rolling consonants around his mouth like a geyser, his is a lustrous playfulness, both religious and spontaneous.

This collaboration with longtime sparring partner David Tudor took place in 1972, a live broadcast for Radio Bremen in a large concert hall with walls removed and a lively promiscuous audience. Cage performs *Mureau*, an 11th-century-dated collage of 19th-century social critic Henry Thoreau's remarks about nature. Four chorales (one live) of Cage's voice are preceded by piano, which by now had abandoned the piano in favour of home-bait electronics. Tudor's work is titled *Rainforest II*, a version for vocal input from the Rainforest series, originally created for Merce Cunningham's choreography amidst Andy Warhol's hovering mylar balloons. The result is one long simultaneous performance of *Mureau* and *Rainforest II*.

Cage's collage work was sometimes more theatrical event than composition, and I feel about it the same way I would about theatre—you had to be there, or any document is a shadowy add-on, a long way from the actual

experience. Having said that, Tudor and Cage's empathy is so clear, and Cage's vocals so human, that the recording is undeniably moving. Ulrich Krieger's album, on the other hand, shows Cage less concerned with communicative expression, as Krieger writes in his sleeve notes, "Instead, freed of this burden, [the music] can address the listener solely and directly through sound." But what a sound! Saxophones, bowed strings and accordion create celestial diaphanous of static notes, a minimal mystery world in which the casual ear might think electronics were at work. These are beautifully refined performances of late Cage pieces involving saxophones, Five, Four, Five and *Hymnos*, plus a sax arrangement of the Zen Garden piece *Ryosky*, originally featuring a flute solo. A total of ten German musicians are involved, and the ensemble playing is remarkable, even telepathic. The luminous qualities of Five and Four's in particular will be a delight to fans of static Ambient work such as Paul Scheffer's recent albums.

VAINO/FENNESZ/VAINO INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE #2 AUTOPHONIE ARSC CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

Although the title suggests ethereal obstructions, the music does not correspond to anything so airy. At times, the sounds produced in these two half-hour live improvisations played on the physical. The first piece is a duo set from Mika Vaino and Christian Fennesz, and the second a solo Vaino performance. It's not an obvious pairing: the fastidious sonic pursuit of Vaino and the dirtied up recovery of lyricism in Fennesz's work are two very separate paths. Indeed, in this performance the two run on parallel timelines throughout. Again the metaphor of architecture seems inappropriate—the collaboration is marked by a want of structural engagement. Part of the problem is in the mismatch between Fennesz's loops and the longer injections of Vaino's sounds. Vaino avoids the introspective qualities of his solo work and draws on the petty tones of his Pan-Sonic work, with whirring proboscides and growling drones. There's a textual gap too: Fennesz's spluttering digital effluences somehow don't mesh with Vaino's set of sounds. The piece would have benefited from a bit of edifying. Nesses suddenly appear that go awkwardly with the rest of the performance and the improvisation sometimes says. The strongest moments are the quietest—that is, the points when it disintegrates into nothing but crackle and hum.

The Vaino solo set is an improvement on the one it does itself before erupting six minutes in with a scolding roar of sound. The piece settles into a hum and then pulses take over, consoiled with violent fire sweeps. Vaino's work is much closer again at this point to the blinding violence of early Pan-Sonic performances, in particular to the way that that disc combines improvisation with repetition, the aggression will be a surprise to those familiar with the sombre colourings of his recent solo material. Later on the piece is taken over by insistent whorls of crackle, which are treated to gender tone modifications. Overall, Vaino keeps the performance rolling through his light grip on the dynamics of its movement.

TOM WAITS ALICE ENTERTAINMENT PROMO CD TOM WAITS BLOOD MONEY ENTERTAINMENT PROMO CD

BY STEVE BARKER

Signed to Enigma, Tom Waits is home at last settling comfortably into America's pseudo genre and effortlessly linking American and European traditions. Alice has been called Waits's long-lost masterpiece. Originally performed as an opera directed by Robert Wilson for Hamburg's Thalia Theatre in 1992, but left unreleased until 2001. The show ran for a year and a half using an unusual orchestra designed by Waits to underpin the songs co-written with his wife, Kathleen Brennan. Rather than being directly based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* and *Through The Looking Glass*, the Waits-Brennan Alice takes inspiration from feelings remembered and dreams recalled after reaching the books.

The album starts with Waits learning about a smoky, slow jazz quartet featuring a muted trumpet that sounds like Chester Baker on moped, and delivering the kind of hip drawl that could earn him a comfortable living in another life. Then the reverie is shattered. We're thrown out of the club and into the real world, stalked on a cold and rainy morning, where the bookies are all bowed tight. "Everything You Can Think Of (Is True...)" is performed in a brutal declaratory manner and a lye-defying logic that only only equate to Screamin' Jay Hawkins in a straitjacket. The sense of loss and longing becomes so physical at points that rather than respond, it's simpler to go with it until the end ends in a haunted scene "Flowers Grow," "Lost In The Distance" and particularly "You Haven't Looked At Me" are as strong and poignant as any song carried out by Waits/Brennan in their distinguished career. The melody of "Fish & Bird" veers too close to West Side Story's "Somewhere," but that's a rare blemish. Instrumentation of baroque saxophones, whips, pump organ, French horns and a string trio of bass, cello and violin (that's a Stron wall, faced with a brass horn and designed to compete against brass) makes for a more formal sound than on any of Waits's previous albums, but the trademark arrangements are still present.

Blood Money uses the same template and the same music. It also first saw life as an opera production by Robert Wilson. This time it's Waits's treatment of George Bernard Shaw's 1837 socio-political play, *Weyden* (already the basis of an opera by Alan Berg), which premiered in 2000 in Copenhagen. Despite the story being one of a soldier murdering his lover after being driven mad by brain medical experiments, this is a much more jaunty, if not exactly playful, affair. It's a dark, possibly joy performed in a style where a Barker from a medicine show is mystically transported to the Warner Republic via Pin Alley. Disturbing and delicious when it's not romantic and hilarious, the songs have a much more direct emotional appeal than the patently surrealistic Alice. The moody but mutant link of the short instrumental, "Kiss Chase," drips Waits and the bays in late Schmitt territory, and the closer "A Good Man (Is Hard To Find)" is a sonically straight evocation of Strindberg's nostalgia.

The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound

Sentry Murray, Tony Conrad

No need to discuss here the fascinating ontology of **Yury Conrad's** *Early Anarchism* (Table of the Elements 33 AXCD). Its anachronistic sound was already tried by Brian Duguid when reviewing its first release in 1998 (*The Wire* 168). The theory that prompts the performances is not so easy to duck. Without a smattering of context, the experience is almost impenetrable in the booklet accompanying the music. Conrad argues that early minimalism, or the Dream Syndicate, spring from the desire to avoid ritual structures, to eliminate the technical author and to create instead a music based on performance and perception rather than intellect and analysis. Intriguing and commendable aims — in theory at least, practice is a quite different thing. While performers might enjoy bowing a drone for hours at a time — I imagine going eyeball to eyeball with John Cale armed with nothing but a D flat might be quite fun — the practice does (rather beg the question) what use is it to anyone else? Listening to a recording of these endurance tests does not present obvious opportunities to participate. Am I missing something? In four weeks of misanthropic application, I observed only two responses in myself, a strong impulse to flee, and a perverse determination to sit still and concentrate on changes in pitch. Thud! I (sometimes) resisted the first and failed miserably at the second, both responses evoking frustration. So does transposing. I did not fall into a specific boxer nor was my spirit lifted. I didn't feel any paradigm shifting at all. They may explain these experiments in pure sound: I cannot, anymore, make them compelling. Their interest derives from their history, the disburged uses to which they have been turned. In themselves, they are monolithic, blank iron curtains of sound. Of the four discs, I preferred the first, *Four Voices*, the piece Conrad recorded on his own in 1964: the sound is dry, resonant and hugely warm, flooding the ears like a hallucinatory amalgam of bagpipes, didgeridoo and traffic jams. By comparison, the compositions recorded six years ago sound cold, bitter and thin. Chalk another one up to analogue tape? (88)

How nearly a decade old. The Ardis Quartet's recent disc of music by **György Kurtág**, **Witold Lutoski** and **Sofia Gubaidulina**, *String Quartets* (Montaigne Nemo MD788147 CD), somehow packs a lesser punch than it did first time round. The three quartets by Kurtág trace his progress from squarely gate modernist to a more rounded lyricism, with the later pieces building imposing structures from very fascinating sections. Kurtág's melodies are taut and sometimes tear-off with the psychological force of Shostakovich, but there's something too confined for my liking and there's certainly nothing here to justify Kurtág's cult status. Gubaidulina's Second Quartet

(1997) is a specially enigmatic work that builds outward from a sustained note into a bleak musical landscape, complete with sudden jolts and abstruse turns of phrase. It's not vintage Gubaidulina and The Ardis compound its greyness with a ponderous performance. Perhaps surprisingly, therefore, it's left to Lutoski's 1965 formatist concert *Junete* to steal the show. Lutoski's early *String Quartet* is complete with the sort of unsynchronized lines and spluttering elastic sections that were fashionable at the time. But here they fuse with more traditional writing into a work of dramatic tensions and colossal contours — perfect for The Ardis Quartet's particular brand of strong anarchy. (PG)

More memorable are pianist Maurizio Pollini's seminal performances of **Luigi Nono's** *Coro Usa Oia De Forzo Y Luo* and *Sofferto Onde Serene* — reassured as part of Deutsche Grammophon's Critical Edition (Deutsche Grammophon 471362 CD). *Coro Usa Oia* is a work that typically blurs the distinction between music and noise. Pollini pounds out noisy blocks of sound from the bass of the piano as Nono's tape part adds another layer of treated piano sounds from below the range of the instrument. Around this monumental block, a huge orchestra inserts wedges of dark, acidic noise that Nono expertly shapes into sounds both meaningful and alienated. The music reaches an agonizing apex as these searching passages rise to the top of the orchestra in a passage that's superbly painful to listen to. After its first performance Nono added a vocal layer to the score in memory of the Chilean revolutionary leader Salvador Cruz, who had died suddenly. The quartet stands as both a voice of society as a disorderly mess and as a humane requiem for a charismatic figure whom Nono saw as providing other possibilities... *Sofferto Onde Serene*... for piano and tape (1976) was a turning point in Nono's output and opened the door into the world of his later, more selective works. Short spurts of material evolve into structures that challenge his haunting lyricism with rude interruptions and paragraphs of uncertain tenor. The tape part may now crack at the edges, but Pollini's performance is masterful and these remain some of the truly great performances of new music from the LP era. (PG)

The Italian *Avanguardia* organization's Get Back imprint continues to serve the interests of free jazz freaks everywhere, first with their ever expanding catalogue of vinyl-only reissues from the legendary French *BNG/Actual* label, and secondly with their matching CD and 180 gram vinyl reissues of albums from the vaults of ESP-Disk. Their latest instalment in the ESP issue programme comprises three very different, but equally indispensable, approaches to higher

mind meltdown. From one of the most powerful proponents of multichordal free jazz drumming, **Sammy Murray's** raging, high octave, self-titled album for ESP from 1966 (*Get Back GET1024 CD/UP*) blasts away with all the fanfare roar of his later albums for BNG/Actual. Indeed the quartet employed on the ESP recording includes future BNG/Actual catalogue hostman and collaborators Alan Silva on bass and Jacques Cousteau on trumpet. On the other hand,

Marion Brown's second album for ESP, 1968's *Why Not* (*Get Back GET1040 CD/UP*), takes an altogether lighter, more institutional approach to its subject matter, despite the presence of that other towering figure amongst free jazz drummers Rashied Ali. Brown had already collaborated on two of the founding documents of the free jazz movement, John Coltrane's *Ascension* and Archie Shepp's *Five Music*, and here his subtle leadership gradually elevates the quartet with a flurry of floating textures that suspend themselves just this side of warp speed. Improv **Steve Lacy's** extraordinary *The Forest And The Zoo* (*Get Back GET1060 CD/UP*) is an album that etched itself into the consciousness of European free jazz. Comparing two lengthy pieces ("The Forest," "The Zoo") that infuse tense, highly compressed, skittering dialogue with high abstraction and a stream of unnerving rhythmic and instrumental juxtapositions, it's a highly disposed and immaculately conceived recording that captures the quartet live at *Bureau Arts* in 1966, and many paths lead back to this well-spring of integrity, intelligence and misrepson. (SR)

A thread of personnel and styles links these high quality jazz reissues, by the three great '60s figures of the Blue Note label, trumpeter **Freddie Hubbard's** 1960 debut as leader, *Open Sesame* (*Blue Note* 72434 9534124 CD), gets a 24-bit reissue in the Rudy Van Gelder edition, commemorating the original producer. It features McCoy Tyner shortly before he became Coltrane's partner and the 'lost' figure of *Time* Books on tenor sax. Despite the originality of his style, the unsavory Brooks (1952-74), real name Harold Floyd Brooks, never recorded after 1961. As Bob Blumenthal's sleeve-note correctly opines, his two compositions, "Open Sesame" and "Gypsy Blue", are the highlights of a classic hard bop session — alternative takes of each are included. Both horn players solo with passion and cogency — Tyner is not always so — and "Open Sesame" in particular is a catchy delight. "Gypsy Blue" is unusual in combining a tango-like melody with a Latin feel. (AM)

Although many considered him ill-suited to the idiom, Freddie Hubbard appeared on many classic free jazz sessions, notably Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*, Eric Dolphy's *Out To Lunch* and Coltrane's *Ascension*. He's also on **Bobby Hutcherson's** *Dialogue* from 1966 (*Blue Note*

72435 3356928 CD), which though less groundbreaking, approaches their status. Failing into that compelling synthesis of free jazz and hard bop which was the label's strongest milieu, it's now reissued with all the clarity of 24-bit remastering. Three of the personnel of *Out To Lunch* are featured — as well as Hubbard, and the leader himself on vibraphone and marimba, there's virtuoso bassist Richard Davis. But the dominant voice is pianist Andrew Hill who contributes four compositions. Saxophonist Sam Rivers, already a veteran, and Joe Chambers on drums complete the live-up. "Guts", with a fine solo from Rivers, has a salubrious feel and features some which bookends the one chord sections for improvisation; Joe Chambers' "Idle While" is gorgeously planned and made the pianist's compositions. (AM)

Andrew Hill's own debut as leader, *So In Love* (*Fresh Sound FR322 CD*), now appears for the first time on CD. Hill was just 19 when he recorded the album in 1956, with Malachi Favors, later of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, on bass and James Slaughter on drums. It features five standards and two Hill originals, like many of *Fresh Sound's* historical recordings, the audio quality is far from fresh. But the driving, atmospheric music is an intriguing, curious glimpse of the miniature master, still indebted to George Shearing's looked hands style — apparently his first route into bebop. "So In Love" mostly sets. Gile's punishing, beautiful melody again defines different backgrounds, an approach which "Spring Is Here" repeats. The pianist's plangent "Thelonious" reveals future compositional promise. (AM)

The New Blackboard *History Of Nothing* (Siren 07 CD), unofficially subtitled "Archive/Rarities Collection 1982-1994 (Dedicated To Bertrand Immet)", is a fitting summation of the work of one of the UK's leading extreme noisicians. Is Richard Rupeus's project an abstract expressionist depiction of hell? A soundtrack for SAM bloodletting rituals? A response to political torture? The sound of a factory worker getting his own back? Or just a great recording NO? Whatever you need a taste for pain to stay the course. The warm buzzing noise of the title track is a decomposition chamber of false security. For the next 60 minutes you are thrust headlong into a vortex of punishing, adrenaline-sucking noise. Quite how this talent is whipped up in practice remains a mystery as no discursive instrumentation reveals exactly the feverish activity, dense sheets of sound. Rupeus supposedly abandoned the project in 1994 declaring, "Even art is art — that is why we reject it," perhaps implying that a broader political project might be asked. Comfortable society awaits with regret. (PE) *Reviewed by* Bledyn Butcher, Philip Clark, Phil England, Andy Hamilton and Stephen Robinson



Avant Rock

Reviewed by John Mulvey

APPENDIX OUT A WARM AND YEASTY CORNER SHINGLESTREET SWING/2001 CD

JAMES YORSTON & THE ATHLETES THE LANG TOUN DOMINO RUG/1981 10"

After the dark inebriation that dominated his last untitled release on Temporary Residence (reviewed in *The Wire* 218), Appendix Out's Alexander Yorstos is in more relaxed form on this captivating mini-album. Fetching up in Chicago with an American pick-up group, Yorstos traces the roots of his parched Californian folk, covering The Incredible String Band and Vashti Bunyan with a minimum of fuss and instrumentation. It's frayed, evocative stuff, straying into pleasantly unexpected territory when Yorstos outstudies Roberts' *Flacks* "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" into a doleful piano modulation.

From *File*, meanwhile, James Yorstos is emerging as something of a fellow traveller to the Glaswegian Roberts' *The Lang Toun* (Yorstos, actually) begins with a small flurry of pipes and concertina, before *The Athletes* lock into an intense ruckus drive propelled by Yorstos's loose blues riffing. On the flipside of this limited 10", Domino labelmate Keenan Hebden (*Four Telt*) amplifies the fun, reverses Yorstos's likely distasteful vocals, and accelerates the whole thing to a brazen, multi-spotted mosh.

PETE AVES FIDELITY LITTLE BROTH/LBN/1 CD

The debut solo album by the 'High Llamas' guitarist Pete Aves, Fidelity replaces the gentle experimentalism of his regular group with something much more firmly in general. He uses a similar song template to his colleagues, Sean O'Hagan, steady organ progressions, loopy Hawaiian guitar effects, half-remembered lounge duets. But whereas O'Hagan organises these into radical musical systems, Aves is more traditional, recording at home and using them as a more conventional songwriting tool.

For all those who find The Llamas a little antipathetic, these highly personal, often rather quaint songs might appeal. Unfortunately Aves's frail voice and chatty, quinescentially English style of songwriting may grate, too. There's only so much amusement to be gleaned from a 10" of Beach Boys pastiche hymning Lewisham.

CEX OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN! ROCK ACTION/ROCKACT/2001 CD

The belated UK release for Rigan, Kewell and Cex's excellent third album, *Oops, I Did It Again!*, which was originally released on Kewell's Tigerbalm label, comes courtesy of Mojo's Rock Action. His two partners are a good indicator of how Cex hovers uselessly between electronics and avant rock. For newcomers, the melodic gentility of much of Cex will come as a shock, given the Baltimore native's burgeoning

reputation as a prankster MC. In fact, the music recalls Ambient Waves' period Aphex Twin, augmented with twined, post-Timbaland beats and the occasional dosing acoustic guitar line. There's an attempt to lower the tone with a couple of skits and some impressively beatific threats – try "Florida Dis Shaped Like A Big Droopy Dick For A Reason", But his lamentable rapping intrudes only on "Furcator", one of the three new tracks added to the reissue. One Genesis is enough, thanks.

CIRCLE RAIND (LIVE) EXTRO EXTRO/2001 CD

The acclaimed Finnish quartet prove to be a frustrating proposition on this live album, collated from three live shows in their homeland last November. Parts of *Rain* are truly astonishing, doing Prog jams that gradually evolve into massive space riffs, drizzle, mantra-like "Loko" that recall Lacus as much as they do Hawkwind. There's something of Can in these lurid grind/grooves, too – which may go some way to explaining why keyboardist Maa Raito chooses to nail native portions of the music with an extemporaneous waltz style possibly meant to evoke Domo Suzuki. But Raito has none of Suzuki's mercurial lightness of touch. His harmonics are more like an ill-placed Gothic sear.

CONSONANT CONSONANT FEW/FEW/2002 CD

Don Carley began his musical career more than 20 years ago as bassist and co-songwriter in Boston's superb Mission Of Burma, a group whose ferocious American translation of post-punk was a formative influence on Sonic Youth, La Puma, Husker Du and many more stalwarts of the American underground. When that group prematurely split up in 1983 – their extreme volume gave guitarist Roger Miller trouble (see *Bites*) – Carley unexpectedly dropped out of music altogether.

The ongoing reunion tour of his former group seems to have prodded Carley back into action, however. Consonant represents his first studio work since Mission Of Burma, recorded with a group of Boston musicians led by guitarist Chris Binkow (Cane, Codomo, Pulman), and produced by Shelia's Bob Weston. Reasoned apart, time here has changed. Carley still deals in the kind of melodic, fissile all rock he helped invent: the excellent "Call It Love", in particular, would have fit snugly on 1981's *Sigoids*, *Grills*, and *Marches*, though a few of the old angles have eroded away. A nice adjunct to the recent Mission Of Burma reissues on Rykodisc.

WARN DEFEVER WHEN FLOWERS COME THE EARTH PERFORATE MY HEART MUSIC PWR/RR/2001 CD

"Sounds like Alice Coltrane meets Wings Of Desire soundtrack," is how the accompanying press release optimistically describes this latest

release from his Name is Alive polymath Warn Delever. Delever sometimes comes across as a dilettante, investigating spiritual musical traditions with a rather detached air. Still, last year's R&B-inflected *HNUA* album, *Someday My Blues Will Cover The Earth*, was notable for its self-emotional core and relative lack of self-consciousness. When *Flowers Covered The Earth* turns out to be similarly satisfying.

Surprisingly, then, the press release got it pretty much right about all, with its evocative suggestion of Alice Coltrane turning into the waltziness of Wim Wenders's earthbound angels. The ensemble for these ten instrumental pieces consists of Delever on piano, a string trio, two percussionists armed with plenty of bells and chimes, and the excellent, Pharoah Sanders-like tenor player Matt Bender. For the most part, they play fluttering, unstable temple music – a mood confirmed by titles like "Morning Prayer" and "Prayer Wheel". The devotional sincerity of it all is questionable, and you suspect Delever will be rekindling another genre before too long. Nevertheless, he's far more convincing in this role than he was as the Harry Smith starlet that got away on 1999's *I Want You Is Love* 100 Years.

ECTOGRAM TALL THINGS FALLING ANIST/100 CD

The 100th release on the estimable Welsh label Anist is, sadly, not one of their finest. The Ectogram trio, from Bangor, have been pursuing their whimsical, patchwork concept of psychedelia and Krautrock for some years now – this is their third album. At times it serves as an object lesson in how badly some of the elements from their source music – well, the humour, chiefly – translate to a modern context. Where contemporaries like Acid Mothers Temple (Ectogram admit to being admirers) locate the ecstatic, transformative powers of psych rock, Ectogram seems incapable of seeing themselves out of the mire. *Big Things Falling*, then, often resembles a saggy indie misunderstanding of *Faust*, further dogged by the breathy sing-song vocals of Ann Matthews – a lot of Clare Grogan for the free festival set.

FÜXA THE MODIFIED MECHANICS OF THIS DEVICE ANTHEM/ANTHEM/2001 CD

The Michigan-based Fuxa is one constant. Randall Newman, does himself few favours by locking off this compilation of rarities, sermons and new tracks with a strict code of "Gis" that not only exposes his Solitude obsession, but also references his love of Spacemen Three – whose *Sonic Boom*, no less, guitars on vocals. From there on up, it's largely business as usual: tapping analogue space fumes from this one-time member of Windy & Carl. Plenty of the 14 tracks here are pleasant enough in a gauzy, cosmic/radiophonic way. But the enduring feeling is one of disappointment, as if Fuxa is pleading for a deep listening approach but can't provide the substance to make it worthwhile.

MAKOTO KAWABATA INFINITE LOVE OCHRE/OCHRE/1 CD

The proliferation of releases by Makoto Kawabata and Acid Mothers Temple has now reached such ludicrous levels that it's hard to separate the transcendence from the mundane. *Infinite Love* is a good one, though. About its three long, blissfully reverberating guitar improvisations, Kawabata says, "I never try things out in advance. It is assembled by the cosmos (or God)." More prosaically, his heavy playing recalls the lo-fi ambience of Flying Saucer Attack and many groups on the Kranky label, particularly on the outstanding 40 minute title track, rather than the psychotropic extroversion with which he's normally associated. The black and white cover shots embrace this. But if its slightly naïf photographs of a naked woman in an emerald bed are meant to suggest post-coital reverie, the music seems too trapped inside the dream syndicate to really register erotically.

STEPHIN MERRITT EBAN & CHARLEY (ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK) SKETCHBOOK SKETCH/2001 CD

Two years on from *69 Love Songs*, The Magnific Fields' somewhat overrated second CD survey of popular song, Stephin Merritt returns under his own cognomen, for the first time crediting a project to his own name. *Eban & Charley* is a decent film soundtrack that purports to show his more experimental side, interspersing the lugubrious ones familiar from *69 Love Songs* with rudimentary game noises and twinkling sound collages, some of which appear to be constructed from clockwork ticks and overwound music boxes. Merritt has established his reputation on a fetishisation of the idea of the disposable pop song, so that it becomes significant in spite of itself. Ironically, then, that these attempts at nominally more serious music seem rather less substantial than he might have intended.

SAN AGUSTIN WITH SUZANNE LANGILLE PASSING SONG FAMILY WINE/NO PVR CD

Suzanne Langille is probably best known as a long-term associate of Loren Mazzacane Connors, but here she adds unexpected midwestern – very much in the tradition of Pat Smith and Thalia Zerkel – to a mini album by New York to San Agustín. Essentially, the trio judiciously spars sprawling electric guitar workouts alongside more earthbound, American blues and folk patterns, so that the nearest comparison is probably the pioneer evocation of Tim Fahlst's *Two Dollar Guitar*. They're impressive enough, but they're still improved by the sonorous means of Langille, whose greatest gift – as evoked by the superb "So I Lingered" – is one of restraint. Unusually, her contributions are tantalisingly brief, drifting away into the mix just when most singers would hold their ground.

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

DENNIS BROWN IN DUB

HEARTBEAT BHT930 CD

Although the core of this set recycles tracks from the *Dubbing The Observer* album which appeared about ten years ago on a King Tubby TRO double, there should be enough rarities and unreleased gems from the Observer vaults to tempt any warring dubsters. Digital vocal versions can be traced to two of Heartbeat's previous Dennis Brown releases, *Some Like It Hot* and *Open The Gate*, and, usefully, Chris Wilson's slowest tracks like the word and the dub. Obvious shots like versions to "Wolves And Leopards" (albeit an alternate mix), "Westbound Train" and "Here I Come" stand here in their glory, but there's a real pleasure to be had in (re)discovering the trademark Observer luring sedition on "Revelation Full", the version to "Tribulation", or choosing the de-chirping of "On Broadway" as the rumbling "Take A Dub".

GLEN BROWN & KING TUBBY TERMINATION DUB 1973-79

SMIPTY VINTAGE V0388 LP

The creator of monodromic rhythms such as Sylvestre Walker's "Deuteronomy" and Walton Irwin's "Lambasted International" (a dub of the latter is represented here), Glen Brown's *Rhythm Master* (Brown was equally adept at more relaxed styles epitomised by the rhythm "Wicked Can't Run Away", sometimes known as "Youthman", and "Forever For The Living", which also feature here) was by no means a dubbing specialist. But when it came to dubbing, his production was difficult to obtain because it was usually pressed in small quantities on his own Pantamine (sic) or South East labels. However, this is not an indication of variable quality; his productions are among the finest and most creative in reggae, and this, too, a vinyl edition of an earlier Blood & Fire CD, pays due testimony to the fact.

DUB WISER

A NEW MILLENNIUM OF DUB
HAMMERBASS BASS5000 CD

Dub Wiser was formed by Rico, QD and Luz after several scattered formative musical experiences in the music world of French reggaebait. Although their debut album is titled as a tribute to A&W's *A New Chapter* D1 Dub, Dub Wiser are committed to performing in France's increasingly multicultural urban landscape, so the crossover approach, rather than resting on a reliance on roots, drags us through reggae, Jungle, electronics, festival techno and industrial sounds all subjugated to a dubbing sensibility. The opening track, "1 & 1", starts with a sweeping synth keyboard piece that almost matches Garth Hudson's "Check Fire" for drama before unfortunately cutting off short. The album continues on high-bess energy throughout. Fire in between Temple Of Sound and Zion Train.

DAVID GOULD ADONAI IN DUB

TZADIK TZ1155 CD

Dave "Solid" Gould is a member of the US - jazz group John Brown's Body and has apparently been fascinated for years by the

spiritual connections between Judaism and roots reggae — much of Rastafarianism is influenced by and takes guidance from the DH Testament. All this could be truly dreadful (pun intended) if the messy kluge-mess of the opening track, "Here Ma' For Dub", were pursued through the entirety of the album. But "Ez Chayim Le Dub" which follows, totally dispels any doubts with a deep and spacious mix of a variation on a traditional Hebrew processional theme. This equation is repeated elsewhere with similarly satisfying results by the man at the mixing board, Jerrie Salt, though it's the slowed down tracks that strike hardest, especially the terrifying "Adonai Hoise Dub" which veers into Muskgaze territory. The ubiquitous Bill Laswell is thanked on the credits, and the album is not too distant from some of his more successful dabblings in the denizens of dub.

HARRY MUD MEETS KING TUBBY IN DUB CONFERENCE VOLUME 1 MODISC HM101 CD

There seems to be an unwritten rule that the word "heavyweight" must follow the word "dub" as an indicator of the music's potential to alter the operations of both mind and body. This notion is alive to the world of Harry Mud, a producer whose work always tended towards the funereal, restrained and dislay even when visiting R&B style workouts. There is a whole stack of releases newly available out of Harry's set-up in Florida, both vinyl and CD, including a set of three dub albums where he set Tubby to work on some of his classic rhythms from 1976 through 1978. "Rome", "Dethar", "Heart Don't Leap", "Love Without Feeling" (it's this last one, a Heptones tune, that the Dumasster converts into one of his most accomplished creations). "Dub With A Difference", where a quartet as started into the studio and dabbed up in pre-prod style. Also worth looking out for are two in the producer's informal Reggae Bible series — *Book Of Drivers* and *Book Of Heart Don't Leap*, where various fellows version in a multiplicity of styles: vocal, instrumental, DJ and dub — and also the Reggae History A-Z CD only set compiling some of the best of his productions from the 60s and 70s, including two from Court Dase.

NAWAFUS MARCUS GARVEY ROOTICAL BUSINESS REVISIT '71

Personally, I know nothing of the artist called Nawafus, but when the version on the flip of this 7" comes with the title "Higher State Of Consciousness", and the artist transfigures into the Holy Taler Dub, I get intrigued. Apparently of 1976 vintage, this turns out to be a real find in the reggae Rare Groove vaults: a Silvertones style mystical chant backed by wild flute and nyabingi drums, with the version being laced with mournful harmonica and, at one stage, a totally uncontrolled flamenco guitar. Surely there can be no more when this came from?

AUGUSTUS PABLO SKANKING WITH PABLO 1971-1977

TROJAN PATRIZ CD

AUGUSTUS PABLO JEL: THE VERY BEST OF JET STAR JSD0485 CD

Putting these two sets together is about as good a Pablo primer as you can get. The first is compiled by the eminent Dave Hendley reggae photographer, writer and DJ, and runs through Pablo's early years with a number of producers — Herman Chin-Loy, Clive Chin, Keith Hudson, Lee Perry, Derrick Harriott, Gusso Clarke and Joe Gibbs. The variation in both the sound quality and production values between the various studios is a remarkable but instructive guide to the most charismatic of reggae stars. The inclusion of the much sought after "Fat Baby", Pablo's version to Haden's epochal production on Bay Records' "50 Skank", and its companion dub piece "Pick A Dub", will also ensure this set sells to collectors. Gold seemingly picks up just about where *Skanking* ends, with a time overlap of around a year or so but no tracks in common, and concentrates on Pablo's own Rockers, Message and West productions, opening with "Chain Gang", a version to Glen Brown's perennially popular "Slaving" rhythm, and moving through "Africa 1983" and an updated "Jawz", the 20 tracks are well paced and the selection impeccable. Especially the inclusion of "Thunder Clap", a version to Bill Withers' "Just A Man Without A Soul", perhaps most memorably covered as "Best Dressed Chicken In Town" by Dr Alimantado.

PRINCE FAR I PSALMS FOR I PRESSURE SOUND'S FIRE CD/LP

Originally out in the UK in 1976 on Lloyd's Sals's Camb Gems, the little London label that blessed Jai Sheredis in the reggae business, this classic is now loaned to the label occupied by Sherwood, Pressure Sounds, which reclaimed the set in a manner which befits its content. It's basically a straight reading of the psalms from the thunderous Far I, with the inclusion of "The Lord's Prayer" for good measure. The Prince chatters away on a series of sensuous vintage rhythms of the time including "Satta", "Dream Song", Horace Andy's well deep "You Are My Angel" and Cornell Campbell's presaging "My Dear Lord I'm Greenest Farm". An extra psalm appears in the shape of numero 44, "We have heard with our ears..."; previously available only on a 45-plate release.

SHAMANSKY BEAT CULTURMUTUR OMNI NUMBER CD

When dub travels it begins to mutate. To check out what's happening on the Russian ethno-trance-dub scene then check out Shamansky Beat, a product of Moscow's UK (Lion King of Kings) Recording Studio. Maybe a group, maybe a collective — difficult to say from the sleeve, and the multiple Website quotes all come in

Cyrillic script. The tunes range from the acceptable chill out variety, "Babylon Barn" by Jaga, through street grooves, "Cubana" by Jah Division, to unintentional experiments gone horribly wrong.

VARIOUS METEOSOUND METEOSOUND CD

Daniel Petes, aka Daniel Metes, is the host of a regular dub night at Berlin's Mama am Dönhof, he contributed to Pole's last album, he is part of the dub bus along with Tom Thiel of San Electro (see *Electronica*), and also a member of the more reggae oriented Submission. He also compiled this album of 14 dub styled workouts which run the gamut from traditional to experimental. All previously unreleased, with the exception of an edit of "Sugar B's Aesthetic Dub Doctor", the Vennise Dub Club member group previously recommended in this column, tracks come from Rikman, Reichman, Thomas Feltham, Barbara Morgenstern, while contributors from the UK are from Menassa and Roosterham.

VARIOUS A NEW BREED OF DUB ISSUE 3 GLUSH-ADD GHD005 CD

Another in the series of Dubhead's budget priced CD-only round-ups of what's happening on the UK roots scene. "Under The Stars" was a preview of the long awaited second album from The Love Grooves, Fresh Produce, due later in the year. Another promising outfit are The Ethernals, whose scheduled debut album, *Embers*, is teased here by its title track. A number of the tracks previously showcased via Dubhead's limited edition 7" and 12" series find their way here, including Inkon Shokas, Margo's H-Fi, Magic Family and Dubclash.

YABBY YU DUB IT TO THE TOP 1976-1979 BLOOD & FIRE BAF039 CD

The early work of Yabby Yu is rightly revered as among the deepest and most spiritually committed of all roots reggae. When his interests turned more to the production of other artists the earnestness which pervaded that early work lived most noticeably with his championing of the young Michael Prophet, a singer coming out of the shadow of the mighty Dennis Brown. The vocalist's Senses Reasoning resides on the same level as The Mighty Diamonds' Right Time as a roots classic. This set recovers the 1977 King Krazy/Prince Jammy mated Yabby Yu Meets Mahatma Prophet Vocal And Dub together with seven bonus cuts lifted from B sides of the time and a 12" flip showcasing Tommy McCook. Even the introduction of an early soundbytes to detract from tracks such as the lowers' tune "Rock With Me Dub" and the rail against Babylon Inna Veban "Mash Down Home Dub". This is about as good as it gets at the end of the 70s, before the hom sections became expendable with the advent of the heavier Riddim dancehall style. [..]

Electronica

Reviewed by Ben Borthwick

JACK DANGERS VARIATIONS ESPECTRALES REGILLION BELLATO CD

Meat Beat Manifesto's mainman is back with the results of a five day sabbath in November 2001. As its title suggests, the album is haunted by ghosts from the past, to the point that former Meat Beat drummer Lynn Farmer crops up on three tracks. Sample heavy numbers like "No Secrets No Sources" would have been standards of Caducus meat ten years ago, and the classic HipHop beats of "Zero" and driving leadrum groove of "Short Heavers" sit firm right into the Reg Bell canon. "D.O.M." has a more 80s West Coast jazz vibe with dissonant horns, plucked double bass and great syncopated drumming. "Nana" is exquisite. Ambient electronica with crystalline funk that sounds just like the era of Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* and Jonah Sharp's *Source* and *Fia* releases.

GREG DAVIS ARBOR CARPARK CRK012 CD/LP

Greg Davis joins the growing ranks of electronic musicians who write autobiographies. Nick Drake's beguiling nostalgia for a simple life. The enveloping warmth of his acoustic guitar, chord organ, glissandos, quiet humming and the bucolic sound of children at play makes this an exemplar of the growing "electronic unplugged" genre. "Acidos" is typical, a delicately plucked guitar circles around the same phrase, looping over and over while chunky programmed beats slip and break out from beneath the smooth surface. Waves of strings are countered by the beats gathering into squalls but they remain suffocated by the stubborn insistence that everything is happy, everything must be happy, it's still happy.

EIGHT FROZEN MODULES RANDOM ACTIVITIES AND BROKEN SUNSETS PHTHALM PHTH CD

TERMINAL 11 SPEED MODIFIED PHTHALM PHTH CD

Ken Gibson's Eight Frozen Modules project uses the precision of synthesizer programming to create a complex sonic terrain best explored with either headphones or a cinema grade surround system. Barely existent beats and glides can cross the channels, while thick strings slip lazily beneath the crash of breaking glass. The Balkan liquidity of "See Response Set" works well with the heavy bassline and breakbeats that become increasingly agitated as the track progresses and different styles move around each other, coming to the fore, then moving. "Acting Is Believing" echoes this movement, this time with minimal techno and breakbeats, while "Invisible Chord" successfully echoes Strauss's *Alto Sprach*. Zarathustra key changes over an unforgiving electro rhythm and fractal beats.

For a more consistently breakbeat/techno there is Terminal 11's debut. However, it is not so much the breakbeats on *Speed Modified* that

define its adrenalin rush as the unremitting speed of the cuts and editing between the filmic samples. "Onita" opens the album with a slow of beats and video game sound effects. Just as with gaming, the layers of crashes and bangs gather in pace and intensity. On "Stop Shoving" chaotic edits make it sound as if you are lost forwarding a Heavy Metal CD to get to the guitar solo yet the beats remain in time. All the information is compressed into a tiny claustrophobic space where the only relief is that most tracks are just two minutes long. But themes get carried over to the next song, and so on, so that as with any good rush, by the time it finishes you are exhausted.

FREEFORM AUTODIOTORISM: VIETNAM/CHINA VOL 2 QUATRAMUS CD 11-13 CD/DVD/LP

Perhaps inevitably the highlight of this double album is the "Sources" CD of field recordings from which Simon Pyle created last year's *Freeform* release (see *The Wire* 213), and which various artists have now mined on the second volume. It creates an immersive environment that could score a fantasy holiday brochure. And this is precisely the problem. Tourism creates apocryphal, mythologised spaces for consumption that inversely represent the social and cultural realities of that place's lived existence, be it Vietnam or Warwick Castle. As with the original release, this is simply an issue for the artist. The association is Stravinsky's "We Made You, We Can Destroy You", a statement that acknowledges the geopolitical history of the region as well as the relationship between the subjects of the field recordings and the technologies used to record and manipulate them. However, the best track is Autotech's *Acadia* minimalist, precisely because they sidestep the premise by treating the sound source as arbitrary and doing what they always do instead of coming over all exotic.

FREDÉRIC GALLIANO FREDERIC GALLIANO AND THE AFRICAN DIVAS F COMMUNICATIONS F153 2XCD

Double CDs are often self-indulgent irritations, but this limited edition release is strong from start to finish. The premise is that Galliano has spent four years travelling with his "divas" in a suitcase making impromptu recording sessions with over 50 musicians and vocalists throughout West Africa. Once back in Paris these are filtered through his own influences and traditions like jazz House with a particularly sleek French ambience. Consequently, the release manages to combine the spontaneity of live performance with detailed studio techniques. The soundscape is full of background voices, laughter, drumming and the beautiful voices of the African divas. "Wo' Iden", "Eyoje" and most of the other tracks on the album will get great summertime dancefloor tunes, but there is also the Jah Wobble style Ambient dub of "Naman Kineking" to vary the pace. Think Ry Cooder's World Music collaborations for the post-House generation.

MARTIN HORNTVEIT FAST MOTION EP SMALLDOWN SUPERSOUND ST50507 CD

Norwegian Martin Horntveit is the drummer and leader of the ten piece Jaga Jaga. It's classic Squapeurish electronic constellations of incredibly structured beats combined with wistful melodies... And then It Started Snowing" is shot through with the nostalgia of childhood. Even as the naive melody is attacked by the beats, it's a playful shower of snowballs rather than an intention to obliterate. Unsurprisingly, "Men! That's Snow" is the EP's comparatively dulled out track with heavy beats, a floating bassline and distorted Little House On The Prairie melody. Even on the more busy tracks, there is a reflective quality. On "Welcome To Wallpaper" and "Fast Motion" clattering beats pile up and overlap with sentimental melodies as they cut in and out of scenes of Ambient anxiety. Not particularly groundbreaking, but it's an auspicious taster for Horntveit's debut LP.

LIMP ORION NORRMUSIC 025 CD/LP

MANUAL ASCEND NORRMUSIC 027 CD/LP

Jonas Murk is a precociously talented 20 year old Danish from Odense. Ascend follows his first solo release as Manual on Hobby Industries, while the group Limp make their debut with *Dense*. Unsurprisingly, with Murk writing all of both Manual and Limp's music, the two releases complement each other well. The fact that Limp have played in support of post-rock mainstays like The Sea and Cake, or Mike Say Thank and Tame Imp says plenty about where they are coming from musically. A combination of electronics and live musicians create Ambient atmospheres and sparse melodies. These ebb and flow as eddies of guitars build in powerful surges to fill the soundscape with a maturity you would expect from a group that formed ten years ago. The gorgeous *Ascend* has a gentlefolk cover with a minimal sleeve note: "... if only for a moment", printed over a Rorschach tropical sunset. Tracks like "Out For The Summer", "Midnight Is Where The Day Begins" and "The Distance" create some environments of introspective reflection with warm analogue electronics and acoustic guitar full of sounds that evoke Bands Of Canada and the perfect sunset.

MRI ALL THAT GLITTERS FORCE TRACKS FT39/FT4 CD/LP

With the CD/double LP MRI hit the dancefloor moving. The album opens with "Deep Down South", a gorgeously opulent Deep House groove that immediately situates MRI in relation to Luomo's still wonderful *Vocality*. Although many of the other tracks don't reach Luomo's level either in their production, vocals or emotional intensity, they are driven by the same ambivalence and desire. Consequently, it makes for an intense sensual atmosphere in a club or as intimate private listening at home. Dubbed-

out Chain Reaction rhythms undig a number of the tracks but the treatment is different in each. "Amethyst Pop Stars" decorates the muffled beats with disco vocal samples and a great House piano that pans across the channels, while "Blue" reworks Aaliyah's exquisite "Try Again", subverting it beneath a veil of scratchy beats and bass. Unlike the original where rhythm and vocal hold each other taut, here there is an unstable balance between the dubbed effects and vocals which adds to the muffledness of the lyrics.

STATIC EJECT YOUR MIND CITY CENTRE OFFICERS TOWERBLOCKS CD

While ejecting my mind is not a condition I generally seek in my listening habits, there are times when it is the appropriate thing to do, especially if you've installed the great little interactive StaticMind video application included on the CD. Berlin based Hanno Lechtmann's debut is a well considered mix of sample, electro, downtempo beats and chilled atmospheres redolent of the Merz Music label. After opening on a weak point with "Cursing" (sic), things pick up with two tracks starring Ronald Lopez (Lo Rocco Rio/Taweret). Keeping alive the ceremonial post/industrial tradition of eulogising the mundanity of life back in the day, he makes an act to "Heardphones" over a quiet beat and melodic Justice Electro's vocals on "Sometimes I'm Sad For A Few Seconds" create a haunting ballad which slowly introduces a great bassline and peels up the tempo. One of the best tracks is "Workshop", where moody strings and melody offset the motorik beats, a big bassline and electro funk.

WOBBLY LIVE 99-00 PHTHALM PHTH CD

Built from three live sessions in 1999 and 2000, Wobly (aka Jon Lividsson) brings on the plunderphonic live into itayhem he has been practising since 1987 using either a dual cassette deck or a CD player, various low grade samplers but never MIDI or laptop. It was pointless to try and characterise any of the sessions because the range of material they draw on is so diverse that the tracks are constantly changing direction. The album opens with "Thanks Violent". Blasts of beats, drab and feedback give way to a heavily cut up vocal sample that loops until the strings open onto an Ambient soundscape. And this is all in the first minute. "On Peeps" and "The Peeps/Herry Shep" use Distorted Peoples breaks which are cropped so tightly they are reduced to piles of beats, scratches, stuttering syllables and HipHop interstices followed by "yuh" and "yuh hui". HipHop and spatter R&B goes tag team wrestling with Balkan composer Goran Bregovic (who scores Eric Karstner's film) in the brilliant "Hello Underground". Elsewhere, doggy wine bar jazz, the snappy lachrymose styles of Morille Jordan and Julio Iglesias, delicate tanka breccias, and incontinent streams of beats and frequencies all rear their ugly heads.

Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

AFRICANO AFRICANO LIVE IN CONCERT NEXT MUSIC/SONO 88077 19CD

A welcome return to Afrobeat for producer Ibrahim Ayila's band. Throughout both discs of this incendiary concert recording, Afrikan's vocal mainstays (Gronnas Pedro, Meduone Dula, Ronnie Bairo and Sekouba Bambino) erase the memory of the group's last outing, the anemic Malalai. A banal intro introduces the group, tapping out a village melody, but the lion's share of 'a salsa Afrobeat' sounds very up-tempo Manhattan — all the more extraordinary as the group's personnel is peppered with French musicians, not the New York salsa veterans who lend inimitable flavor to Afrikan's studio discs. "Tiwadur," the title track of the group's debut, has become a signature tune for singer Ronnie Bairo. He also tackles (favorably) another Afrikan calling card, "Boya Boy." No mean feat, this, as the tune is closely identified with former member Pepe Sack, whose passing in 1995 ended the group of a voice rich in grit and character. Hearing the rapturous response to every track in the set, it's a wonder that the group bothered with studio recordings in the first place.

CELLO TRIO TANGO BRASILEIRO PIRANHA PIR1576 CD

Buenos Aires's contribution to the canon of recent music, the tango, by definition is a heady admixture of rock, machismo and sentimentality. The first two qualities are entirely absent, as is any sense of the tango as dance music, on the revealing question: "20th Century Brazilian Cello," made by three cellists, two Brazilians, one German. Fans of Carlos Gardel or Astor Piazzolla (or tango's great connoisseur, Tzviio Prebisch Astor Piazzolla) will find little to sink their teeth into. Considered as parlor music, the piece by Hector Viza-Lobos, Ernesto Nazareth and others are immaculately performed and recorded with luxurious depth of field. Yet the overall lugubrious tone casts a pall on the set that no amount of vigorous bowing can quite dispel.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC RITUALS OF THE OUBANGUI BANGZILI & MBURU LE CHANT DU MONDE CH29341191 CD

The recalcitrant delay tactics and mediocrity of Rites and Rites, the mechanical tempo modifications of Caga, all are seized upon to the Gambia-Bolika position adjacent to the Oubangui River in the Central African Republic. This revealing audio portrait of yet another society whose musical life would be considered cutting-edge in the West, for the Gambia, treated outlandish and progressively obscure singing are merely part of the furniture. While precisely structured, these performances may as well be the soundtrack for an unending bus journey, with every track radiating beyond enthusiasm. Vocal music comprises much of the Gambia's repertoire, though the neighbouring Mbundu trumpet orchestra — whose members each contribute a single pitch on the connect beat — adds hom-

charts (that Charles has might have loved) to a woman's chorus. Harro vokal, the ethnomusicological designation for fear of science, plays its part here as well, a thump pump the soul of a car door (ngambi) pumps out hard aspeeps, to fill in the gaps when the singers take a break.

FANFARE CIOCARLIA IAG BARI PIRANHA PIR1577 CD

Operating at speeds often in excess of 200 bpm, a Fanfare Ciocharia track might sit well on the decks of a Gabala DJ. On Iag Bari, the group from northern Romania are joined by leading lights of Bucharest's gypsy music scene, among them Rom Bengele, whose accordion, violin and viola percussion mix beautifully with the Fanfare's phrasal of brass and woodwinds. Even when strutting through a comparatively funeral selection, such as "Balada Lu Iuan" or the album's opener, "Dance (Western Blues)," a sense of impending chaos clings to the group. "Lume, Lume" features the mysterious Bulgarian chorale now known as Angeli, prompting thoughts that perhaps the saintly singers had shared studio time with these gypsy seducers, not to worry, the Bulgarians were only sampled, and to good effect. As purportedly interpretive Western groups inevitably wind up in the pockets of multinational companies, gypsy bands such as Fanfare Ciocharia and Taraf De Haidouks are the only outlaw rockers left standing.

ARDAVAN KANKAR OVER THE WIND TRADICOM CMOSS80408 807054500 CD

New music from an ancient instrument, composed and performed by Ardavan Kankar, whose warlike with the sarus is evidenced by each and every note played throughout the six pieces that make up *Over the Wind*. The hammered strings of the sarus are perhaps more familiar from North Indian classical music (of Shikharika Sharma), as crystalline tones having migrated to India along with miniature painting. While the elastic form of Indian ragas may allow easier access than the stern disjuncts of Persian music theory, Kankar imbues his writing with a light touch, in accord with his hammer technique. Also, owing to the intuitive tuning developed by the composer/performer, the sarus here can replicate through four different tonalities. A welcome solo effort from Kankar, whose talent stood out amid the rest of Persian musicians contributing to Kayhan Kalhor's two-spring Night Silence Desert (also from Traditional Crossroads).

OZZIE KOTANI TO HONOUR A QUEEN (E HO'OHIAWAHIA I KA MOI WAHINE) DANCING CAT 0602283818 CD

Queen Lili'uokalani (1838-1917) was a prolific composer in addition to being a beloved monarch of Hawaii, one whose artistic legacy has withstood the passage of time, her "Aloha 'Ea" may be the dearest thing to a Hawaiian national

artist. Over the past five years, slack key guitarist Ozie Kotani has emerged 13 of her melodies for solo acoustic guitar. An appropriately respectful tone hovers over his interpretations, enlivened by his busy thumb on the bass strings and a remarkable ability to sculpt intricate, spot-perfect ornamentation when other players might be content with a quarter note rest. Any Dancin' Cat release can be counted on to provide both impeccably detailed recordings and booklets containing as much information (discographies, tuning and tablature) as any Hawai'iophile can stand to absorb. To Honour A Queen honours the high standard set by producer George Winston for his band-of-lone releases, but more importantly, it establishes a bakers' dozen of timeless songs with reverence and good humor.

RENE LACAILLE & BOB BROZMAN DIGDIG RIVERBOAT TUG10571 CD

Island music aficionado Bob Brozman, having spun gold in the company of musicians as Duran Duran and Hawa, jets to the Indian Ocean and shores up a marriage on Lila de la Reunion with that anthropologist Rene Lacaille. Digdig plays both as a new opus on Réunionnais music and an especially cheerful summary of Brozman's accomplishments to date. The American guitarist is nothing if not consistent: on Digdig, as on every one of his collaborations, he is a terrific listener, ultimately sensitive to his partner's every need. Brozman's tone seems to emanate from a Tapani disc, that was never set in the first place, his time working with the Hawaiian Lila Moa family band has obviously served him well. Lacaille's seggi music, all Gaudi flourishes and syncretisms, leaps into occasionally elliptical meters, is colored of a volcanic sort, but Brozman is undisturbed, sketching the arc of his bent pitches to near breaking point, then hammering on a flurry of staccato notes. One particularly arresting flight of fancy comes in the form of "Debussy à La Réunion," the imagined visit of the French impressionist composer to Lacaille's home turf, as recorded on vinyl with Brozman's mischievous overlay of the 50s hit "Since I Don't Have You."

RACHID TAHA/KHALED/ 3.23 CHEBBI BANGZIL & MBURU 060505046 CD

Rai, the rebel music of Algeria, is for many a one note groove, dominated by (formerly) Cheb Khaled. This live set redresses such misconceptions to an extent, though Khaled encompasses the lion's share of the spotlight. A pry that Rachid Taha is only allowed one solo turn: his voice is appealingly ragged on "Ida," a reminder of the renegade sibyls confirmed once upon its stars. Cheb Khaled is underpowered in comparison. It is intriguing to contemplate how rare, once constructed from accordion drones and a single Roland drum machine (El Khaled's Hada Raykoun), has morphed into sprawling arrangements for multiple orchestras, flamenco guitar, stadium rock drumming, etc. Still, as

produced and co-managed by former Gong guitarist Steve Hillage, 12.3 Solers documents what must have been an amazing concert. The disc is marred only by a tacked-on studio track, a cover egging tangle on the Sinatra anthem "My Way," as sung in the original French. Having mutilated Lennon's "Imagins" (on Kanza, his last studio disc) you'd think Khaled might be wary of cover versions, but no such luck.

VARIOUS BOLLYWOOD: THE ROUGH GUIDE WORLD MUSIC NETWORK B021704 CD

Not so long ago it was an arcane effort shared by those who preferred kitch with their World Music. Now the breaths, agency playback singers and the Wayne/Spector styles who composed for Bombay's film studios are in danger of being anthologized beyond all reason. Despite severable complications arising by labels such as Odeon and Normal, the high water mark for surveys of the film genre was established early by the three volumes of Golden Veils Of The Silver Screen (Globevision). These pathbreaking discs have been equalled finally, and without overlapping content, by The Rough Guide To Bollywood. Fans of the ultra-eclectic will warm to "Pyra To Ab To Jaga," Asha Bhosle's duet with RD Burman that melds surf guitar, John Barry pop film motifs and sub-paro paring on the choruses. There are also plenty of no-no emplacements, but unlike other films collections which fascinate on an imagined Golden Age in the late 50s/early 60s, this Rough Guide survey extends to the present day, tracks such as Lucky Ali's "Ek Pal Ka Jaana" indicate the impact of MIDI and sampling technology (no less used on what film critic J. Haberman once deemed "MTV for the very, very stupid").

VARIOUS THE SPANISH RECORDINGS: EXTREMADURA ROUNDER 801411763 CD

Latest among the missives of field recordings made by the red-hotting Alamo Lanza, Extremadura presents 19th Spanish songs recorded, under some duress, in the early 50s during the Franco dictatorship. This diverse collection was assembled from material that was recorded by Lanza in the face of interference by former Nazis in Franco's employ, a fascinating linguistic and chronic shortages of recording tape. The various selections and sack dances grouped here, with their tales of regal mists, dances set alight, adulterous omen pedlars and debauched rites, weave memories of Luis Buñuel's morbid documentary film about the Pyrenees mountains, Tiern San Jan (Land Without Bread). Whether stereotypes are may harbor concerning Spanish folklore will be shattered by a few moments' exposure to the withering rap of Marcelino Días Himeras as he decries the plight of "The Poor Guy And The Nun," an anti-dread ballad that would have caused Señor Buñuel no end of amusement. Scolding and (mostly) women's voices rub up against drumming of an altogether more robust stripe.

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

BLACKICIOUS BLAZING ARROW

MCA 000115807 CD

With a new major label deal heightening expectations, Blackicious's sense of purpose has evolved into a howl launching fire at our hearts. On this sequel to 1999's *Aie*, they're assisted by folk rocker Ben Harper and patron saint Gil Scott-Heron. R&B diva Jagwar Wright and Dilated Peoples' Rakaa and DJ Babu

Unlike fellow Quannum members DJ Shadow and Layfe's Lynia Bone and Labelz, Blackicious are more stylists than innovators. At his best, Gift D1 Gab vocally leaps over Chief Keef's smart producers, terribly stacking words in a clear, understated cadence without blissing apart the "house chakra" war. "Structure" ("Chorus: Calisthenics") finds them smothering atoms with Out Chemist in dramatic fashion, even upping the memorable "A to Z" from their *A to G* CD with stop-start rhymes split apart by compounds. "Paraphrase President" mashes a puns barrage to an unyielding drum roll, against which Gab valleys "paraphrase paraphrasing rhythm" like he was teasing ephemerality at a window. On the other end of the spectrum is the sinuous groove of "Nowhere Fast," which captures Gift D1 Gab questioning himself, "back in a flurry of illusions going nowhere fast." (Missi Reviews)

DRY HUSTLE DO IT QUITE SLOPPILY

KUTTER WHITE LABEL 12

Dry Hustle is the man de Drake of Drew Daniel from *Arrested*, as "Do It Quite Slopily" is his most expensive posture of the blingy aesthetic inspired by Miles Eliot's ubiquitous "Get Up Fresh Dn." Taking the idea of "fishing for gold" quite literally, Daniel allegedly converted \$10,000 of personal savings into silver rings and gold combs, swished it all around and used samples of said dinks to reconstruct the go-go table talk of Timbaland and Elliott's original in an effort to kill materialism from within. Though a bit starchy and mechanical, the result is surprisingly listenable and begs the obvious question: where did Matthes get all that cash? Indie maochists dragged into *White Williams* (latency nostalgia by a bunch of hot pants hooshes and manages only to cry into his beer. Actually, maybe indie maochists should listen to it. For less reduction at albumism and more nomenclature, point your Web browser to a floating MP3 of "Love Will Fresh Us Apart," a patched-down Elliott stands in for the late late Curtis over the instrumental to Jay Davison's "Love Will Tear Us Apart."

THE HERBALISER FEATURING MF DOOM

IT AIN'T NUTTIN'

NINJA TUNE 26NAP1 12"

The do or die rap game is all about saving face, whether it means belting back a foul-mouthed young toy or creating your naïve kids MF Doom (formerly Zev Love X of Native Tongue runs KMD) gave up on it all that hospital years ago, trading in the untouched peachy cheeks of youth for the

then faceplate of metal that never leaves his public face nowadays. The swaggle's now a swerve, but the steps are never halted, and on "It Ain't Nuttin'" he awakens himself why the blessing is with the struggle. Imagine a bent, rip rendition of "My Favorite Things" through bloodstreak retrix, as Doom eyes pass like a "can of cold Old Gold" and "a full on go." With a bottomless, beaten down, a tear wells as he asks for a pair of down boots and a "Metal Face mask with a built-in frown" over Dilie and Jake's tree swinging horns

KRS-ONE AND THE TEMPLE OF HIPHOP SPIRITUAL MINDED

KRS MC CLASSIC CD

You have to respect something like the religious concept *alvin, spiritual Minded*, not exactly a breadwinning concept in these troubled times when someone like Nelly claim-jumps KRS for "It's Not, as he beats on "like it to God," "When 2000 looks at 2002, who you think they'll respect, in er you?" KRS's latest is a low-key collection of "urban inspirational" and "hardcore street gospel" complete with aspherical innovations and full chums, and though the homemade Cassio aesthetic occasionally grates, there's still enough liberation theology here to make you want to dissent. Dissatisfied with disliking MC Shan's cover 15 years ago, KRS sets his sights a little higher on "Ain't Ready," taking on the institution of organized religion and "church guys who wear more make up than *Destiny's Child*," "Your sport ain't ready/Your church ain't ready/Your hustle ain't ready/Your doctrine ain't ready." An interesting alternative to the spate of 9/11 *hallelujahs* operating in the Material realm

MR DIBBS ABDUCTION OF THE TIMES

MARY JOY WITHPOOR MC

In the insert to his recent *Random compilation*, Dibbs can be seen giving rapper and dear friend Sage Francis a "gastro-intestinal baptism," a scientific way of saying his bars on the wacky *Arcton MC* That's his thing. HipHop's "lost noded playboy" thunders this line dishing love and hate daily, forcing his white admirers of Christian records and 1980s thrash Metal onto unsuspecting crowds of *Levene Sports types*. Abduction is a neopaganic magenta session that finds our manny, goated bang doing battle with Mary Joy's recent *Age Of The Times* compilation, a debt he owed the fledgling Oakland label, a debt he still stage fright and was unable to verbal on command for one of the label's promotional videos. Mr. Lf commands anyone to scream and D-bas strikes with a womanly sneeze, foreheading the psycho blond on side two between *Back 65* and *Spoon Thwart*, geography and harmonize their moans and shakes. Doubles of Sack's elegant "Life Gave" results in the original, snaky ego charming self as the former *Nones* man duly mourns his partner's animosity death

PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS OST

OST RECORDS CMMSR CD/V

OST does to know that some folks never lose sight of their perches. Even as Babylon and Hollywood burn, you can be sure to find *These One* and *Double K* giving the ice-berg to anyone daring to encroach on their favourite dig spots. On "The Dig," the pair brings about their wary fingers and crooked bows, instead claiming *why* for sister, wife and ancestor and forsaking food, shelter and clothing for some virgin beaches. Given the pair's impeccable taste in raw materials, it's practically impossible for PUTS to make a bad song, but their obsession with their own obsession makes it equally difficult for them to produce exceptional songs either. Lead single "Jappy Joe" isn't an interpretation of the similarity titled "Dear Little Jappy-Jay Jappy" (from Sonny Jones's 1950 musical, *The Gables*) but rather some laid outstaple and an angle baseline that nearly curves out of control. *Ham* drums and a swell guitar pack make the proud "A D Song" sweet enough, and check "The Break Down" for their secret weapon – the vibraphone. "Hing Loose" deviates slightly from their manifest, a chic boss adorning a 1962-style party rap. Seeing as how PUTS have sworn to never sample anything recorded after 1973, and maintain their 1993 style ad infinitum, perhaps "Hing Loose" is the most progressive song they'll ever record.

QUASIMOTO ASTRONAUT

ANTICRUST ARTIST 12"

Madlib got the beats that'll make you say, "Tang!" Quasimoto of moonshots and June 7, 2001, Darius's finest words the glass from his eyes and casts three more fly words toward the vicinity of DJ Premier. The title out now the out from *Common's* "The 6th Sense" and finds his bookkeeping story after story tracing the interstellar spaceways with an easy Earth woman in tow. The man and his voice fall back to Earth on "Am I Confused?", answering his own query and answering the sad hawks in his neighbourhood "tryn to maintain while the betches weight gain," this time over a strum that momentarily suggests Prince's wisted "All I Together Now," "My naps used to be a breakdown/But now his [yng of dyng of cancer], Madlib sighs before another hit of oxygen and an awkward ego yawl

SHINGO2 MY NATION (MOJA NACIA)

MARSH JAY MIX 12"

A couple years back, glottobrother rapper Shingo's *Apocryph* EP pulled the white-nationalist feathers of Japan's right wing by re-arranging the detest of laundry – the nation's World War II transgressions. As if incensing the state wasn't bad enough, Shingo and his *Terracotta Trope* nation to finish the job, awakening the logic of national demagoguery. The despairs is word for sure; check the *A side* as Shingo, who was born in Tokyo and raised in Toronto and England, borderlines with Asian Shewood alums *Dry & Heavy*, whose credentials as "Japan's most celebrated dub band" sound laughable until

you hear the warmth and exceptional quality of their Jammy-apocryph music. Unfortunately, they submit a surprisingly lame video within the main track, allowing the sleepers – Shingo's multiethnic *Terracotta Trope* – claim to the champagne band. The dub stashes Shingo's one mind, one nation! (adorned in favor of Ras Nalaw's glaze melodic.) It is, as Remen says, a rotten excess in that daily tension of memory against forgetting, then Shingo's multiculturalism against forgetting for edification – "Winelodge is the definite key to the path to defeat post defocus" – suggests that the feel-good utopianism of the "HipHop nation" may amount to more than a cute catchphrase and bad bands.

VARIOUS GLOBAL TURNABLES

HIP HOP SLAM H-HOODA CD

The latest volume of Billy Jay's important search compilation series boasts contributions from nations near and far, though with the sweeping scope of globalisation, you have to wonder how for those faraway places can get into the American blueprint. Unfortunately, yes, and as a result, the majority of these over-eager cuts don't live up to their own chest-thumping titles, let alone the huge shorts or even *Chase and Deak*. All that said, thank Billy for the 89 *Stranger Gangsta*, accomplished DJs, but more importantly, really funny dudes who use themselves the challenge of remaking and reconstructing *Star's* aforementioned classic, "Lesson 3." Their "Eso Code CD" winning stays close to the original and little Shing's pop in, puts down his silver mane and serenades his thing over the luscious lounge rock of "Apache." The guru cuts of "Scope" get mocked by a garish vocal sample while two *awful* sportscasters describe a black-chap's breaks in the background.

VARIOUS SWEAT

KODOL POP 13 01X 12"

The current fascination with the shiniest US R&B and rap styles would be slightly less disturbing were it not for the dance intelligentsia's sleeky identity politics and staid leanings. *Sweat* sermons German glitch and *Strutted* glitz a struggle basted in blood, sweat and tears. The usually introverted MOP quiver and sway as their "It's Kite Up" gets remastered by *Sooty Suckers* jungle jazzmies, the original down sugar horn blasts supplemented by *Clayton*. His *Genotype* struts beyond of her saffron struts, but she didn't earn her stripes as a "Survivor" for nothing and so she struggles upstream against a crushing assault of "Wines, Butter" and *lamb-shaking* bass. *Time* meet *Nine* *Cliff* shows up twice, but neither assault is halfway as heavy as *Dry Hustle's* charge *June*. *Dry Hustle* seems the only one who allows his petter's humanity, allowing *po* *Ashlyn* (TSP) resistance to the comp's overall *Technobation* project. His aggressive re-emerging of "We Need A Revolution" doesn't so much suck from *Ashlyn* and *Timbaland's* understate as allows them the misdeed in choice from a variety of close-cropped, Eastern *Belt* *haikus*. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

PIERRE DORGE & NEW JUNGLE ORCHESTRA ZIG ZAG ZIMFONI BURNING HOUSE CD

Danish guitarist Dorge's New Jungle Orchestra has been in existence for 20 years — so named from its original West African inspiration, and Dorge's love worship of Duke Ellington and The Jungle Orchestra at the Cotton Club. In fact, some tracks take their musical material from the Far East, using the same gamelan scale prominent on Neil Ardley's legendary *Kaleidoscope Of Rhythms*. Dorge's exciting arrangements use electronics intelligently on some tracks, and the soloists are excellent.

DRESSER/HEMINGWAY/ MOTT REUNION — LIVE... AT THE GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL INTERPRET EAR RECORDS CD

Bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Gerry Hemingway were for a long time one half of The Anthony Braxton Quartet, and bassline saxophonist David Mott had resided with Hemingway in the mid 80s. The trio were recorded live in the Chalmers United Church of Guelph in Canada in 1999. Dresser and Hemingway set up plenty of grooves for Mott to display his full panoply of free jazz techniques, from vocalizing through the instrument to circular breathing. Tone and texture is Mott's strength — when he's not producing a continuous flow of sound, his lines are often incredibly banal, with a weakness for scripps of scales. But the patterns set up by Dresser and Hemingway are so compelling, this lobe hardly matters.

GERD DUDEK "SMATTER" PSE CD 01 CD

Saxophonist Gerd Dudek, born near Opole in present day Poland in 1938, was a founder member of the Globe Unity Orchestra in the 60s and a sometime partner of Evan Parker. Albert Mangelsdorff and Tony Oxley played his elevenets, as well as Ingemar Delsing, who's a "holy one" for his power to bring about strange coincidences on the New York subway, comments that. *Smatter* is his first album under his own name. Here the altoist is partnered by the first rate line-up of John Parrillo (guitar), Chris Laurence (bass) and Tony Levin (drums). The first three compositions, title track included, are by Kerry Wheeler in characteristically plangent vein. Dudek plays both alto and tenor sax, and the tenor player's standard "Body And Soul" begins as a free jazz burnout. Not groundbreaking by the standards of Evan Parker's *Psi* label, but very satisfying.

FUCHS/LEHN/SPERA LUNGO OMNISOUND CMM101010 CD

FUCHS/BRYERTON/SMITH THREE OCTAVE MEETINGS BALANCE POINT ACUSTICS 000 CD

Working Fuchs' interest in tribalist extremes can tend to dryness, but here there is much of interest in his work on contrabass and bass.

clannet and soprano sax. Lingua features a trio with Italian percussionist Fabio Spata and Thomas Lehn on his vintage analogues synthesizer, in a compilation of live recordings from Berlin and Cologne (see *The Wire* 203). While his highly creative effects can be quite industrial, a mark of Lehn's musical intelligence is the way he gets electronic and acoustic sounds to blend together — though it's also been suggested that Fuchs gets a sound akin to an analogue synthesizer out of his contrabass candel. The leader appears in the more orthodox context of bass (Jerome Smith) and drums (Jerome Bryerton) on *October Meetings* — 12 "instant compositions" recorded in the Bay Area, again offering a music of adresses that achieves a remarkable blending.

LAZRO/ZINGARO/LÉANDRE/ LOVENS MADLY YOU POTASHI PRO CD

Alto and baritone saxist David Lazro is an under-recorded figure — he's in a couple of other Potash CD's, including a duo album with soprano Carlos Zingaro, and I recall him on an excellent 1996 disc on Vard on record with Evan Parker and Jay McPhee — though as Bill Shoemaker's sleeve points out, his instruments haven't been the first choice in free music. Compared to the frequency of free jazz widemen, his concept is cool, which means that though this music doesn't approach white heat intensity, there are passages of red heat. His concept couples well with Zingaro's keen, buzzing violin. Paul Lovens is best known for his work with Alex Van Lierop and The Globe Unity Orchestra, and he works his idiosyncratic percussion kit with great delicacy. Joëlle Léandre commented in her recent *Isabelle Jubilee* (*The Wire* 216) that she doesn't make much distinction between free jazz and improv, and this fine quartet definitely resides in the latter. *Blues Festival* last year, certainly has overlapping affiliations.

NAFTULE'S DREAM JOB TADKIM T2110 CD

"Jerome Kern and George Gershwin, that's Jewish music to me," commented Lee Konitz after making a record for John Zorn's Tadkik label that turned out not to fit its Radical Jewish Culture ethos. There's no question of Tin Pan Alley and assimilation in this latest addition to Zorn's series. The sextet features Glenn Dickson on clarinet, David Harris on trombone and Michael McLaughlin on accordion, plus guitar, tube and drums. Sater's *Grosvontes Nos 1 and 3* are completely transformed, though the point of this is under. Compositions are mostly by Dickson and McLaughlin, and prove interesting rather than compelling.

NICOLS/KRAABEL/HUG TRANSITIONS EMANEM 4003 CD

Transitions connotes even the most wary listener — such as this writer — that free voicing is fun

to listen to. Maggie Nicols is a veteran of the game, Situationist and non-virtuoso Caroline Nicolai on alto sax, plus some vocals, leads the 20-strong group of female saxophonists. These *Transitions* Zurich-born solo player Charlotte Hug explores unusual sonic spaces such as the ice barrel through the Rhône glacier or the Roman baths at Baden. Here she interacts with her partners as well as the more conventional acoustic of the Conway Hall, London. The trio get together three at last year's Freedom Of The City festival (see page 62), and returned shortly after to make this excellent recording without an audience.

JASON ROBINSON TANDEM ACCRETIONS ALPINE CD

Jason Robinson is a saxophonist based in California. His freely improvised duos with luminaries such as pianist Anthony Davis, trombonist George Lewis, and bassist Peter Kowalek are meant to be "floating signposts", without fixed meaning — which means, I think, that only a few have a compositional bias. "CT", with Davis, is a mostly melodic free improvisation, which even breaks out into a blues. The title of "Hog And Swine" is brightly evoked by George Lewis's trombone. Live electronics are contributed by Nathan Hubbard and Stephanie Johnson and the results are always stimulating.

HAL RUSSELL'S CHEMICAL FEAST ELIXIR UNHARD MUSIC SERIES ALPINE CD

Chicago multi-instrumentalist Russell formed the legendary NRG Ensemble in the early 60s. When he died in 1992 at the age of 66, he left hundreds of recordings, documenting his career, NRG and pre-NRG, in the hands of right-hand man and saxophonist Moss Williams. *Chemical Feast* was a pre-NRG ensemble, here captured live at the Elmer Gallery, Chicago in 1979. Russell is still mostly on drums, with a two-sax lineup of Williams and Peter Middleton, plus George Soutigra on vibes and Russ Dittus on bass. This is the rollicking, explosive, subversive, satirical, eclectic NRG, and the results are ineluctable despite the ungainly mono sound. "Manes" is one of Russell's gleaming "tone poems" which, as John Coltrane's sleeveless explains, he begins by lighting a candle, the group then concentrate intensely on the flame, and the piece ends when the leader extinguishes it.

JOHN TAYLOR & KENNY WHEELER MOON EGRA SCARAB CD

JOHN TAYLOR WITH THE CREATIVE JAZZ ORCHESTRA EXITS AND ENTRANCES OH NO! CD101 CD

UK pianist John Taylor, partner of John Surman, Charlie Haden and Miroslav Vitous, recently celebrated his 60th birthday and Moon is an apt celebration of his British and American past.

talents. It's a beautiful album of duos with cornetist Kerry Wheeler, plus fluent clarinetist Garthie Winslow on some tracks. Compositions are by Wheeler and Taylor, and there's no discernible difference in quality — Taylor's title track is particularly so lovely as any Wheeler theme. The cornetist's "Introduction To No Particular Song" has as self-deprecating a title as the classic "Everyone's Song But My Own". "Six Eyes" is an affecting jazz lingo.

Sadly, the contrast with *Exit And Entrance* is complete. The Oh No! label is an appropriate destination, as the arts grant, this time from South West Arts, again lays its curse. Taylor overcomes himself in the guise of a classical modernist composer, with uncommon glances at Bono and Messiaen in a set of pieces for octet. Any resemblance to B05 jazz revival big band Loose Tubes is superficial and doesn't walk to the parents' credit.

BILL WELLS TRIO ALSO IN WHITE GEOGRAPHIC GEOGEOIS CD

For nearly 20 years, Wells was a well-kept secret on the periphery of the Scottish jazz scene. Jazz players resented his lo-fi, lo-virtuosity approach. "I didn't want that slack sound. I saw it as pop music played by jazz musicians, and I think they looked down on it," he commented in *The Wire* 202. Wells has a lot in common with Steve Beresford, notably that, as Beresford put it in issue 218, "One of my strengths is that I'm not a very good musician" (read "musical" as "player"). There's also an affection for lounge music, while John Barry, if not Wells's other great love Ennio Morricone, is present here too.

There's a productive tension between pastiche and involvement, between using his simple material and just quoting it ("Preservation Piece #1", an Oxford sample, stands out as quite madcap and captivating, while "The Last Guster Lesson", with a prominent place for Robert Henderson on trumpet and Steve Jackson on guitar, almost matches it. A haunting album.

WREN/STABBINS/RILEY/ SANDERS FOUR IN THE AFTERNOON EMANEM 4007 CD

An orthodox jazz line up of tenor sax, piano, bass and drums, and the results are conventional in that slow and tempo tracks seem to alternate. But that's not there was no prior discussion about the structure of events, and so precomposed material. Bassist Tony Wren, active again at the London Improv scene after a long sabbatical since the 70s, is the convener of the group. For those familiar with soprano and tenor saxophonist Larry Stabbins's work with Working Week, it's a surprise to find him in this context, though his input CD, a long, slow Riley's quest for order is clear, and when attention is on him, melody is never too far away, most clearly on "Where Am I The Snows." The supposedly posted "transmission" recalls a certain album by John Coltrane. A compelling release shows the Emanem label is still on a roll.

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

BUS RATCH

BUS RATCH

MARIA DISC PASH 1 CD

BLOCK/NEHIL/BUS RATCH

OLIVIA BLOCK, SETH NEHIL & BUS RATCH

MARIA DISC PASH 1 CD

Bus Ratch are a quartet group from Kyoto. Bus Ratch features a quantum version of the group hacking through thickets of turntablist noise. Grooves are gouged, there's radical scratching and crunching of vinyl. Tapes and samples are fed in to vary texture and assist structuring but allusion to sources is rarely straightforward. "Goodwill Lovers" alternates bursts of electronic buzz and a repeated piano chord. More often the raw material is pulverised or distorted into malleable form unrelated or ambiguously linked to its initial identity. Voices, accordion, snippets of jazz surface, but ultimately Bus Ratch wrestle their quarry into abstraction.

On 1 May 2005 a trio from the group performed at Kyoto's Club Mito with two American visitors, composer Olivia Block and sound artist Seth Nehil. Block and Nehil work with environmental and natural sounds and here it seems they were addressing the intrinsic acoustic properties of stores and levers. Their activities are not self-evident in the music but emblems of characteristic Bus Ratch agitation are suspended in quiet sequences of more subdued and introspective noise. The overall sound is nonetheless gritty and tense.

PETER BRANDMAYR

APPARATUR ZU DEN

GRUNDLAGEN DER PHYSIK I

DURAN 014 CD

Artist Brandmayr's grainy sonic essays, recorded at the Institute of Seebach in February 2001, come draped with allusion to gravitation, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and the quantum Professor W. Kofler. The electronic residue from Brandmayr's experiments is formed from crackles, whirs, deep booms, buzzing and metallic clanger. It's at one voice and indistinct, self-explanatory and indecipherable, which would suggest that Brandmayr has succeeded in his project.

RICHARD CHARTIER

DECISIVE FORMS

TRENTÉ DISCAUX TDCD113 CD

RICHARD CHARTIER

OF SURFACES

UNE 008 CD

Decisive Forms comprises the murmur of distant turbulence, remote starbursts, the closer click of a switch at the interface between barely perceptible hum and a thick silence. Around midway through its 43 minutes, a whisper swell and then a layered chord are heard when the switch permits. Of Surfaces offers three comprehensible minimal compositions. The title piece throbs and pulses gently between the stereo channels, subject only again to abrupt cuts. "Vanance" purrs, settles then reacts to a quiet jitter. "Composition" burns then settles to a low-key drama: busy almost cluttered by Chartier's

standards. Headphones and closed eyes help to meet his demands and to disclose rewards.

CRIB

RENNANT

TRUE CLASSICAL 013/TROUSSELORE 0168 CD

Basist Even Sarno continues his investigation of Ambient droning music. The title piece features Jeff Gauthier's swishing viola plus reloaded recordings that transform the drift into a tangle, packed with subliminal action. A soundtrack and an atmosphere for a tale of loss and moving on. "The Abstract Truth" is all shimmer and heavy shadow, severed at its root from the blues that guest guitarist Gil Semon once played with Willie O'Connell. "Eve (Part 1)" evokes guitar Nels Cline and Peter Dinklage's voice and voice. It was made for a film by Brett Randle, whose brother is tangled with the instruments, and Joseph Harmon's tape loops and enveloped with Crib's aura.

GOEM

AGRI

12K 1015 CD

Using laptop and multichannel sound card, Roel Meekels, Frans De Waard and Peter Dumelevis were able to record Amb as they travelled from Rotterdam to Canada and Japan. The eight resulting tracks are graphically physical, consolidating their development of a potent kind of smothered and reduced techno. There are stunted pounding beats that fit like blunt weapons, but techno formulas have been emptied out or paved back to brutish implications. Floor and walls start to pulsate, the bludgeoning locks in with the listener's pulse just then twittering or static crackle still hold the attention, as if the body's experience and the mind's focus have become strangely disconnected.

KOZO INADA*/8

B5*2.7K

72 MP3CH 1991 CD

KOZO INADA &

PHILIP SAMARTZIS

F1

DIGITAL NARCIS 01011 CD

Using computer generated tones, Kozo Inada cuts like a laser through auditory space, agitating molecules, testing the perceptual range of the ear and sending pets into frenzy. He favours pitches and intervals that unsettle and challenge, music that's clean, sharp and incisive or elemental like lava flow or a torrential rain yet subtle to the waves of "b [0]" and "b [1]" and it can become a contemplative experience. A complimentary piece by "b [0] (Nico Saito)" uses low and extremely high tones, pulses and intermittent loops to invoke Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation. The nighttime music duet performed by Kozo and Melbourne-based composer Saito produces a fascinating and often lovely blend of electronic and found environmental sound. Artifice melds with the elements to access cosmic psychosocial locations, virtual rainfall sweeps across a drone phospha, free and static cascade, pure beams penetrate dense undergrowth, current warbles and pums.

PAOLO PISCITELLI

CORES MIX 1

6/SONATA 6/81 CD

Piscitelli, based in Torino, is a sculptor with a performative orientation. Cores is his initial venture into sound art. A Plexiglass box is moved and a battery of samples from a performance in Brussels, where Piscitelli wrapped approximately 25 kilometres of sticky tape around seven polyester shapes of his own devising. The resultant sound, as you can probably imagine, suggests someone dithering out of a tab of balloons. There are footsteps too which, apparently through some additive procedures, come to resemble cannon fire. It lasts 13 minutes and the instruction is to play it loud.

GHISLAIN POIRIER

IL NY A PAS DE SUD

12K 1016 CD

Visual artist Poirier, from Montreal, enters the techno materialist frame with a simple yet gently effective combination of beats that shuffle and glide, loaded melodic fragments and resonant sequences. The music waxes best where the beats remain relaxed and unrumpled and the resonance is at its most cavernous, evoking an unthought pathway through the void. Elsewhere there are sluggish passages where the material is stretched to thinness and starts to drag.

RADIO ZUMBIDO

LOS ULTIMOS DIAS DEL AM

QUATROAS 05119 CD

Juan Carlos Barros, formerly of cult Guatemalan group Bohemia Suburbana, celebrates the last days of AM radio. Samples from Latin American broadcasts and jazz recordings seep through sequences of languid dub and drum 'n' bass saturated with murgue and Rio-Mex. Barros aimed to emulate the feel of Tio Puente's salsa groups. He has certainly captured their fire and crafted in the inspired mix of ingredients, freely cradled into passionate evocations of a culture enriched by contradictions.

ROBERT RICH & IAN BODDY

OUTPOST

DN 11 CD

Rich's analogue synthesizer pulsates, and his lap steel guitar and futes kase with Boddy's synths and prepared piano to create luminous electronics. Perfect control is exercised throughout the journey, but there is no real surprise. Mystery is contained and the sleek vehicle has been polished until it assumes a hypersonic gleam. Great if you love lush textures; disappointing if you like to be challenged.

SCHIZOTROPE III

LE/PU

EMMA 100 CD

"How to fold the text so it can be enveloped in music?" Gilles Ouleux posed the question in Le Pu (The Pu), his philosophical engagement with Leibniz and the Baroque. It's a question that's perhaps answered on Le/Pu where Richard Parks, best known for his work as Heldon, teams up with techno-punk novelist Maurice Dumeac.

Pinhas's electronics and Frappetronics-style guitar create Milibus shapes, entwined with Jérôme Schmitt's tape loops and punctuated by Antoine Paganotti's mangled drumming. Harsh notes teem by and about Netzsche with conceptual intensity. It's heartily Gallic, relentlessly earnest and makes the desired impact.

STYLUS

MYNYDD PRESELI

MARINHO M1034 CD

Gwyld Morgan celebrates the landscape of Pembrokeshire, its birdlife, mountains, mossy hummocks and megaliths. This is not standard pastoral fare, however, but hard edged post-minimalism with various sonic acids and ends cast into a shimmering electronic flux. Morgan's artless piano phrases may resemble a little too closely casual doodling in the village hall, but the synthesized sounds are kept bubbling to a point where they draw the ear and the added ingredients are often well-placed.

SYNTETIKA

100% SYNTETIKA

SHAPED HARMONICS 02 CD

Syntetika come from St Petersburg and play attractive, melodic electronic rock, riding a current that runs from Klaus Schulze to The Orb but sounding fresh. Keyboard player Elena Gorycheva is committed to lively sounds and is skilled at keeping velocity to bay. Tolas and glistering strings, skittering beats and cosmic glossolali, baroque whispers and warm bass. Beatific electronics for sunny afternoons.

RAFAEL TORAL

EARLY WORKS

TOMLAB TMT19 CD

Acclaimed Portuguese guitarist Toral has excavated pentecost tapes dating from 1987 to 1990 to show light on his later course of development. The shorter recordings are in the vein of Brian Eno. On Land and confirm Toral's skill as a shaper of mostly Ambient ventures. The concluding piece is very different, dry, spiky and post-rock, apparently involving deliberate permutation and open to chance. Its listening pace creates an odd kind of suspense.

RALF WEHowsky & KEVIN DRUMM

CASES

SELECTION 5500 CD

Drummers worked with guitar and deicers and supplied raw material to Wehowsky who used electronic means to edit and compose two pieces of self-ordered musique concrete that should attract listeners with an interest in deconstructive guitar music. "Case R" intercepts amplifier hum and piercing drones with sounding strings, whining tones, metallic screeches and indeterminate sampling. "Case B" is more flexa, incorporating a sustained barrage of small attacks on the guitar's body, bridge and occasionally strings along with prolonged and penetrating high pitches and numbing bass. Concentrated, vivid, disconcerting music that never descends to brutality. □

Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain. This month: Anthony Huberman picks up sound art's vibrations at this year's Whitney Biennial



Installation View: Sound art at the Whitney. Left to right: Marina Rosenfeld, Tracey Morris and Christian Marclay's mute instruments

Musical references abound at this year's Biennial at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, a survey of contemporary American art made in the past two years by 113 artists. Photographer Janine Gordon's grainy images of Heavy Metal moshers capture the social angst and ferocious violence of the rock concert. Christian Marclay's oversized drum kit and recorder and his "mashed" guitar give the unplayable instruments an insistent silence. Lorna Simpson's video installation of a grid of 15 anonymous results humming a Rogers & Hart song explores the difference between the personal and the collective ways music can be appropriated, and Destiny Al Monistrol's (artist's Mike Kelley, Cory Loren and Jim Shaw) mural-size paintings immortalize The Stooges, Sun Ra, George Clinton, Lester Bangs and many others. A CD traces Meredith Monk's cover of the catalogue, which includes pieces by the rare participating sound artists, as well as five others. Janine Gordon (aka Jah-Jah) contributes a Techno/rap song after her most-potent experiences; performance group Gogol Bordello presents what they aptly call "Ukrainian Gypsy Punk Cabaret"; artist duo Archive (Chris Kuback and Anne Milani) attempt to re-find the "voice" of deceased French artist Yves Klein by interviewing psychics; Christian Marclay's Guitar Drag video uses recordings he made when

drugging an amplified electric guitar through Texas backwoods with his pickup truck, and a recording of a Destiny Al Monistrol abstract noise performance finishes the disc.

For the first time, sound art becomes one of the official "categories" in the Biennial. Curated by Debra Singer, some works are interspersed throughout the exhibition's main galleries, while others are contained within a room equipped with an elaborate surround-sound system. In the electroacoustic video/performance artist Miranda July's *The Dribble* consists of cryptic dialogue fragments where different characters—all performed by July herself—jump from one short scene to the next in a dizzying web of interrupted scenes. Performance poet Tracey Morris continues this focus on language with *Sound(s)cape(s)*. The only instance where the exhibition explores sound's investment in social and political ideas, Morris's series of poems reflect on race, gender and street culture through spontaneous poetry. Words are thrown out: "Ain't she beautiful, the too black, she too beautiful," repeated until the words change meaning: "She ain't beautiful, she too black..." But the strongest sound project installed in the galleries is by 12K artist Richard Ravitz. His minimal interventions in silence—digital music hoaxes and clicks—address the physical properties of sound as it borders on silence. Presented on headphones

with other quiet and almost spiritual works, the piece stands as the perfect sonic equivalent of veteran artist Vija Celmins's beautiful paintings of delicate spiders' webs hung nearby: it has a fragility that suggests rupture but a persistence that reveals intricate patterns.

The physicality of sound reigns as a central curatorial focal point, and a multi-channel system using cutting-edge DVD Audio technology provides an ideal opportunity for the invited artists to shape an empty space. Stephen Viallet's *World Trade Center Recordings: Winds After Hurricane Floyd* (1999-2002) and Marina Rosenfeld's *Delusional Silence* stand out. Viallet demonstrates how sound can invoke an awareness of physical space when he recorded the building's slow creaky creaking after a violent windstorm and reveals a sound that has more in common with a century-old wooden staircase than with an imposing tower of steel. It's impossible for any New Yorker to listen without wincing with each falling creak. Rosenfeld uses vinyl recordings from her performances with her group *Shoe Feet Orchestra*, which she then re-performs on turntables and records again. Her staccato of sound, silence and staccato-incorporate personality and the glitch aesthetic: the mood is eager and nervous, yet hesitant and playful. Digital beats and interrupted noises jump from speaker to speaker, mixed with more organic gong-like

echoes and singular sustained notes. Grigor Aesh (aka DJ Olive) calls his sound "roof music": a combination of discreet yet distinctively urban found sounds with HipHop beats and voice samples leads to a (somewhat dull) meging of city life and music. Sound artist Marjanne Ancher challenges her listeners to hold on to her slippery textures, as she develops overwhelming waves of sound across the multi-channel system. Finally, Meredith Monk's vocal piece is made up of a series of two-note intervals passed between singers, allowing for new sounds to emerge from the changing harmonies.

Singer is aware that the investigation of sound's physical properties has emerged as a central concern among sound artists, but the importance of generative structures is clearly missing. Besides an intriguing project by Web artist Mary Flanagan (software which randomly collects images and texts from other computers), chance-based systems don't reach the prominence they deserve. Without the algorithmic sounds of a Kim Cascone or a Michael Schumacher, for example, the exhibition omits what Umberto Eco called the "open artwork": the experiments in open structures where artists restrain from claiming ownership over sound composition and choose instead to simply plant a seed. The Whitney Biennial shows until 26 May. Website: www.whitney.org/exhibition/biennial.shtml

Go To:

American folk music has a surprisingly vibrant life on the Web. Folklorist **Alan Lomax** (www.alanlomax.com) is featured in this month's *Primer* (see page 50), and while his archive of over 5000 hours of audio is sadly not downloadable from his site, you'll find plenty of sound files scattered throughout, and have the pleasure of stumbling across gems such as a low res video clip of Sam Jones singing "Devil Got My Woman." Interesting digression: NYC rock guru and producer Don Fleming (one member of Hart Japanese Noise Mobsters, Donkey Jr. Foot and many others) dies all the looking for Lomax, so he would have listened weeks to the soundtrack of the Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (www.obrothermusic.com), which sold over five million copies, received a handful of Grammy awards and whetted people's appetite for American folk so much that the Coens clearly couldn't let a good thing go. They arranged for a

concert of the music from the *O Brother Soundtrack* at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium in May 2000 with artists such as Gillian Welch, John Hartford, Don Tyrnagle, Emmylou Harris, The Fairfield Four and a slew of others, head documented *Don Pennebaker* to film the extravaganza and subsequently produced *Doves From The Mountain* (www.dovesfromthemountain.com), now a CD and DVD. Both sides contain previews of featured songs, silences and related links.

In 1988 the Smithsonian Institution acquired the collection of Folkways Records The **Smithsonian Folkways** (www.folkways.si.edu) collection now contains 2168 recordings of near 30,000 musical performances, songs, narratives, rituals, oral traditions, sounds and spoken word from across the US. The site offers thousands of songs to download, however you'll have to pay if you've trained up **Liquid Audio** (liquid.com)

who charge approximately a buck for each download. Cheap if there's something specific you're after; expensive if you want to browse. But sniffing around the site will lead you to treasures.

The Web presence of the mother of American **Acoustic Memory Library of Congress** (memory.loc.gov/ammem/ammemhome.html), is essential. The collections from all around the States encompass anything archivable: photos, maps, essays, sound recordings, pamphlets, correspondence. There's access to a wealth of sounds: the North Californian sound archive with 800-plus downloadable songs from the 1930s and 40s; the Hispanic collection, let alone "Pieces from the Dust Bowl." The Charles L. Bold and Robert Sorkin migrant Worker Collection, 1940-1941; and "Fiddle Tunes Of The Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection," to name a few. **ANNE HILDE NESET**





Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Beats working (left to right): Larry Rivers, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso (in hat), David Antram and Allen Ginsberg during a break in the filming of *Pull My Daisy*, 1959

OFFBEAT: COLLABORATING WITH KEROUAC

DAVID ANTRAM
THUNDER 5 MOUTH PRESS HBK \$29.95

David Antram is a great American composer who has succeeded in transmuting the primal energies of folk forms like jazz, blues and various World traditions into large-scale symphonies that find their perfect literary counterpart in the work of Jack Kerouac. Like Kerouac, Antram was obsessed by "crashing lightning in a bottle" and establishing processes that would facilitate the precise delineation of the spirit of the moment. Antram's jazz connections run particularly deep, having played with everyone from Dizzy Gillespie and Charles Mingus to Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor, but it's primarily his relationship with Kerouac that *Offbeat* sets out to document. It's a declaratory, autobiographical trawl through Beat times in New York City and beyond, as he wrestles to keep a hold of Kerouac's true legacy in the wake of his death.

Antram was a close friend of Kerouac's throughout his career. Most famously he accompanied him playing French horn on the occasion of their first ever jazz-poetry reading at the Plaza Art Gallery in New York in the autumn

of 1957. "Collaborating with Kerouac was as natural as breathing," Antram trumpets, going on to explain in breathless detail Kerouac's philosophy of "first thought, best thought" and the way that his syntax mimicked the circuitous lines of a horn player, each sentence drawn out like breath as it demolished any grammatical restraints. However, his recollection of the abject content of countless drunken late night conversations between himself and the likes of Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Lamantia and Gregory Corso is either an unparalleled feat of memory or an attempt to pass off his own version of Kerouac's speedy monologues as the real thing.

Of course, any biography is going to have to rely on slotting various time-worn jigsaw fragments back into place, but Antram's constant hammering on about the fact that he's a "primary source" means that these conversations — with huge chunks of Kerouac's speech directly quoted — are presented as being beyond dispute. Antram also denigrates all of the Kerouac biographers who came before him and had no experience of the man himself, with the sole exception of Douglas Brinkley, and at points *Offbeat* reads like an extended press release for Brinkley's forthcoming authorised biography. Not

despite Antram's status and his avowed determination to quash the myth of Kerouac as being some kind of beatnik cartoon, the picture he paints is one of the most one-dimensional and often outright embarrassing portraits of Kerouac ever rendered outside of the covers of *Mad* magazine. Here Kerouac and Antram speak in great, clumsily expository chunks of fact that read like pure beatnik caricature as they expound earnestly and endlessly about their mission, converting bums and kids to their cause at the drop of a hat.

There's nothing much in here that you haven't read before, although some of the reportage from behind the scenes during the making of *Alfred Leslie's* short film *Pull My Daisy*, a recreation of a scene sketched and narrated by Kerouac himself, makes for interesting reading. The soundtrack that Antram composed for it, improvising along with Kerouac who refused to do any more than two live takes, is highly evocative and seems to perfectly capture a moment in eternity, more than living up to all the claims that Antram makes for it. His account of Ginsberg and Corso's endlessly disruptive guffing throughout the shoot is enough to make you want to slap the pair of them, but perhaps they too are suffering from Antram's questionable

instant recall. The second half of the book is more interesting, as Antram recounts the bleak years after Kerouac's death when the entire culture seemed to narrow once more. He spends a lot of time disparaging over the use of the term "Beat", which he indignantly protests has been used to denigrate the works of Kerouac and co and steer them off into some pop-cultural ghetto that prevents them being taken seriously as great literature.

By the end of the book Corso and Ginsberg have also passed away, and one of the most affecting scenes takes place in a recording studio in 1998 where Antram's working with his group under the supervision of Jim Samps and Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo, adding musical colour to tapes of Kerouac reading "Drizzle 21D Blues" and "Washington DC Blues" for Ryko's *Jack Kerouac Reads On The Road* disc. As Kerouac's voice floats through the studio, Antram closes his eyes to play and feels his old friend awaking right behind him.

Still, as a biography *Offbeat* feels uncomfortably like a work of fiction, and as a fiction, well, it just feels uncomfortable. Anyone still looking for the real Jack Kerouac would do best to go back to the real primary sources: his own books. **C**

DANCE OF DAYS: TWO DECADES OF PUNK IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL MARK ANDERSEN & MARK JENKINS

SOFT SKULL PRESS PINK \$20

BY BEN WATSON

Narrating the story of punk in Washington DC may look like a quaint (or colorful) exercise in local history, but Andersen and Jenkins transform a detailed account of groups, tours, releases, benefits and ideological wrangles into a persuasive worm's-eye view of the rock process. Their tale spans begins with the advent of *Sex Pistols* (1976) and ends with *Nirvana* (1994), when US punk went mainstream and everything had to be brought.

Nothing quite like it has been written before. Narratives which adopt the music industry's fixation on success before the past in an artificial light, misconstruing what was once collective endeavor, writing with idealism and political correctness about rock's subculture, or the ethos of individualism and competition that drives the straight world. Andersen and Jenkins cut through the passivity and alienation of such voyeurism. By focusing on the events and actions which create an alternative scene, Andersen and Jenkins illuminate such bizarre phenomena as slum dancing, stage diving, teetotal punks, *Strait Edge*, Generation X, the 'girl' revolution, black Nazis and Nirvana (Who could have guessed that 'moshing' derives from the Jamaican phrase 'mosh it up,' or that 'X' may derive from the symbol left-tapped upon teenage hands to prevent service at the bar?) Their account of the terrific 'Ed Weese is a pig' campaign holds lessons for every anti-capitalist

Although the group only receive four or so pages, perhaps the book's greatest achievement is explaining Nirvana, whose triumph and demise were rendered incomprehensible by the media hubbub which followed Kurt Cobain's suicide on 5 April 1994. The authors' painstaking account of the 'no compromise' punk ethic created in DC, Olympia and Seattle explains how success found Cobain into an ideological cross, signing to a major and becoming a household name, transgressing every rule. In *Upstart Rebels*, Gail Merous made entertaining connections between Baudelaire, Debord and The Pistols, but as a guide to US punk, his book is like negotiating Capitol Hill with a map of Paris. *Dance Of Days* outlines the social background to the link between punk and ethics forged by Ian MacKaye (Minor Threat and Fugazi): youth alienation, middle class guilt, religious repression, a nation in which violence (from racial assaults to the destabilization of foreign regimes) is endemic. By interpreting US punk as an attempt to forge community in a culture, caught between a deadly to the imminent onslaught of the Republican Bush, Andersen and Jenkins did much light.

Soon after arriving in DC in 1984, Andersen joined Positive Force, a leftist, grass roots collective committed to MacKaye's independent, non-exploitative label *School*. Jenkins had been covering the punk scene from the beginning. Their contrasting perspectives — community activist and newspaper journalist — help to render their story three-dimensional (occasionally one or other breaks off from the central narrative — basically Andersen's text heavily edited by Jenkins — to relate a personal experience or opinion). Andersen had a breakdown in 1993. He retired from DC to write,

but didn't feel ready to publish until the media 'cultures' had stopped feeding on Cobain's corpse. The conclusion is moving: recognition of punk as an interaction between personal development and larger political issues takes place against a commitment to socialist politics. It has to be said that from the perspective of UK punk, there is much that is distinctly peculiar. Andersen now works with DC's St Albans Catholic Church in the absence of a welfare state, religious organizations evidently provide essential community aid, but this involvement sits oddly with UK punk's gleeful cynicism. The self-seriousness of the quoted lyrics is stunning, a gruesome mixture of adolescent confessional and self-help therapy. The book begins with an epigraph — 'I thought my eyes would be dry/But now I see and know...' — which would have any self-respecting UK punk howling with derision.

Rod Gini was born of DC hardcore. In *The Wire* 215, Jennifer Fitefem of Le Tigre completed to Jay Press that guys sometimes feel more like counting seconds than rock 'n' roll. In the same article, Kathleen Hanna said that media attention led to some 'like a stranger breaking into your bedroom and reading your diary.' Such comments reveal a completely different mindset from the cynical interventionism of Malcolm McLaren and Bill Drummond. Andersen and Jenkins show that the naive gawing side of DC punk — a reflection of the larger society's absorption in solipsistic psychobabble — was not exported by feminism, but was there from the start. Henry Rollins starts to look less hardcore and more like Philip Larkin ('You fuck you, you Mum and Dad, etc!') Given the moral prescriptiveness of *Strait Edge* ('No liquor, no drugs, no sex, no meat, no money...'), one

wonders what its adherents make of the millions who recently took over the streets of Barcelona and Rome, people for whom a bottle of wine and a spill and a record by live Rolling Stones are not signs of Mamon but sure signs of primitive indulgence, bludge against Catholic repression and hypocrisy. Maybe these punks could ease up in the puritan ethic, read some Charles Fourier.

In this regard, it's paradoxical that both authors emphasize the life-changing impact of the Pistols and The Clash, whose revolutionary 'nihilism' laughs in the face of bourgeois moral dilemmas ('Problems, problems, problems... the problem is you!'). The connecting point was punk's physical immediacy, a confrontational quality denied by the corporate rock spectacle. As it says here on page 397, after Lux Interior has 'played in front of my face, vomiting and throwing shit through the windows, breaking up the whole joint... you can't go back.'

That phrase sums up the book's thesis: punk is not about recent sales or fame, but the politics of specific situations. This might be a genuine theoretical advance. It opens the door to exploring the significance of radical forms like free jazz and improvisation. Given this insight, it's a pity that the missing link between punk, UK, radical left politics, improv and grut guitar playing — namely Eugene Chadbourne — never makes an appearance. Perhaps Andersen has been working on such connections for the last five years, events he won't relate because he doesn't yet consider them 'history.' Along with the exploratory power of its analysis (backed up by a well-proofed text and an excellent index), the fact this book refuses to be finished, thus holding the future open, is inspiring. []

LEONARDO MUSIC JOURNAL VOLUME 11: NOT NECESSARILY "ENGLISH MUSIC": BRITAIN'S SECOND GOLDEN AGE NICOLAS COLLINS (EDITOR)

MIT PRESS PRC 240C \$30

BY TOM FORCHARD

This volume, the DC component of which was reviewed in *The Wire* 217 (the CDs are also available with the journal), concentrates on the British experimental scene of the 1960s and 70s. The editor is the American composer and professor Nicolas Collins. In his editorial, Collins suggests that British music entered a new 'Golden Age' in the 1960s — a period of artistic richness of the sort not experienced since Bart and Purcell. Certainly the 1960s saw the rise of new sorts of musicians in Britain, players that Hugh Davies characterizes in his article here as more 'happy-go-lucky and self-aware' than their institution-bound predecessors. Yet Collins's idea of a Golden Age is a ludicrous one, nostalgic and canonizing; it's a concept that represents the sort of authoritarian, hegemonic rewriting and controlling of history against which many of these experimental musicians were reacting.

It's a difficult question: how might we document and preserve for study activities that once defined themselves in opposition to such

fidelity and ossification? The Scratch Orchestra certainly followed such a self-definition, and while Michael Parsons contributes a carefully researched and scholarly piece on the visual and theatrical aspects of The Orchestra's early performances. Parsons finds a precedent for the group's activity in the work of Fluxus and John Cage, but he suggests that, while Cage always retained the role of composer, The Scratch Orchestra's collective 'ownership' of its compositions and performances reflected a different kind of looseness and informality. And yet it might be arguable that The Orchestra's attempt to release itself from composer authority was not enough to release the group from control by the canon: from our historical perspective, it looks like the Orchestra itself has turned into something of a canonical asset.

In an excellent introduction to the CDs, which he compiled, David Toop suggests that, unlike their American and Continental counterparts, many English musicians were loath to commit to theatrical dogmatism. Instead, many remained somewhat ambivalent in method, technique and aesthetic. Such a failure to lose things that seriously at odds appeared in British music, acting as both a blessing and a curse, a distrust of seriousness gives the British both their idiosyncrasy and their conservatism. Both of

these traits are present in the vast body of piano music that has been amassed by some experimental composers, most notably John White, and the pianist and scholar Sarah Walker contributes an article on this designated 'amateur-friendly' repertoire.

In his entertaining autobiographical sketch, Stuart Jones suggests that Britain's long tradition of musical amateurism is part of an unexamined culture, where 'muddling through' is the preferred way of doing things rather than a contingency plan. Maybe (although somewhat periodically) this is why a commitment to improvisation and inclusiveness figured so strongly in the experimental music of the 60s and 70s. Cornelius Cardew thought that the ideal performer of his Twelve would be unnamed 'musical innocents', and that graphic piece is as explicit link between musical improvisation and the visual art from which it drew influence. Matthew Sempson's article positions improvisation in the context of the automatic painting and writing of surrealists like Masson and Breton, and of later abstract expressionism.

Edie Prohm contributes a sketch of the 60s improvisation scene. It's a sort of family tree, as prose, and the author is characteristically unpersonal, mindful of the bias and unavoidability of such a personal history.

Phew! the recollections of the days when improvisors were in Vogue, literally and figuratively, are brief but colorful. In the 60s, he writes, the London scene was characterized by 'a generous sense of convergence' between different areas of musical and artistic activity, the drummer suggests that, even in the experimental area, a developing professionalism has in some way hindered this openness. Conversely, Hugh Davies's piece on the live electronics group Gentle Fire, of which he was a founding member, links the group's decline to the 1973 oil crisis, which had the knock-on effect of limiting some continental institutions' funding of the arts.

Articles by writer-performers like Joe Banks, Scamner and James Schofield, all summing up their own recent work, stand for the experimental sorts as it exists in Britain today. These three are primarily sound artists rather than musicians in the more usual sense, I suppose that Collins sees today's younger improvisers and composers as working within a tradition established in the 1960s, rather than experimenting *per se*. The work of these artists is undoubtedly interesting, but maybe the Journal's enforced exclusion of so many other sorts of musicians should make us ask questions about our giving privilege to 'experiment' over anything else. []



Driven to abstraction, Morton Feldman

THE NEW YORK SCHOOLS OF MUSIC AND VISUAL ARTS

STEVEN JOHNSON (ED)

ROUTLEDGE £19.99 Pbk

By Andy Hamilton

During the 1950s, Eighth Street in Manhattan's Greenwich Village was the site of The Club, a regular meeting place of artists, and "prime habitat" of the movement christened abstract expressionism. Among the participants were artists Philip Guston, Willem De Kooning and Robert Rauschenberg, critic and modernist philosopher Clement Greenberg, poet Frank O'Hara, composers Edgar Varèse and Stefan Wolpe, and the founders of what became known as the New York School, John Cage, Morton Feldman and David Tudor.

Although he was invited on three occasions to speak there, Cage had as ambivalent relation to The Club. But then he's such a sea genera figure that any attempt to link him with a particular artistic or philosophical movement always needs immediate qualification. At first Cage was attracted to the "all-over" surface of abstract expressionist canvases, which, he wrote, held "no centre of interest", but seemed as though it "could continue beyond the frame". But the influence of Marcel Duchamp's Dadaism neutralised this attraction – meaning perhaps that Cage had moved from modernism to postmodernism. Certainly he came to detest the figure who now embodies abstract expressionism: Jackson Pollock. But the composer must be tied to that movement, and indeed to painters as such, that Morton Feldman. Feldman had a lifelong habit of naming composers after abstract expressionist

painters: for Franz Kline, De Kooning, Rothko, Chagall, for Philip Guston. As editor Steven Johnson writes in his introduction to this useful collection of articles on connections between America's leading indigenous schools of music and art, "Abstract Expressionism formed the core of [Feldman's] being".

David Nicholls's article, "Getting Red Of The Blue", offers an overview of the work of Cage, Feldman, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff. Discussing neo-Dadaist Robert Rauschenberg's influence on Cage, he quotes the composer as saying, "I probably worked longer on my 'talent' piece than I worked on any other... what pushed me into it was not just but the example of Robert Rauschenberg. His white paintings – Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns financially supported the 1958 retrospective of Cage's music in New York town hall – together, Nicholls tells us, with Emile De Antonio, middleman in Cage's burgeoning mushroom supply service. Though Nicholls is an expert on the American movement, the problem with his article is that he never ventures an opinion of his own on the New York visual artists. He draws attention to this lack by simply quoting from art authorities, highlighting the main problem of the volume: the complete absence of contributions from art critics and aesthetes. While Nicholls correctly notes that abstract expressionism was the first American art movement to gain international recognition, he also fallaciously claims that the music of the New York School composers was "the first indigenous... American music to have a major international impact." Since the idea that jazz is America's classical music has become a cliché, I guess we're back to the idea that jazz

isn't a 'serious' music.

It is a virtue of the collection that it draws in major composers on the periphery of the New York School. Olivia Mattis's article on Varèse, who was also a painter, points out his collaborations with Joan Miro. Mattis discusses Clement Greenberg's view that music is the dominant art form of the 20th century, "because of its absolute nature, its remoteness from imitation, its almost complete absorption in the very physical quality of its medium." Certainly because of its nonrepresentational nature, music was a paradigm for the artists of the New York School. Jazz, because of the role of improvisation, was also an inspiration, before Hans Namuth's photographs of Pollock at work led to the sobriquet 'action painting'. Pollock in particular was a jazz fanatic. Feldman's long friendship with painter Philip Guston was a rare case of mutual influence. But given the background of the contributors in music rather than the visual arts, it's not surprising that it's the influence of painting on music rather than vice versa that predominates.

The two most rewarding articles are Austin Clarke's on "Stefan Wolpe And Abstract Expressionism", which claims Wolpe's *Enactments* as an abstract expressionist classic in music, and "Feldman's Painters" by Jonathan Bernard. Bernard's article is the only one which really gets inside the deep but qualified parallels between painting and music, and which has a profound understanding of painting. He makes the radical claim that "Feldman learned to compose mainly by listening to painters talk and looking at their work". In a concluding discussion of the categories of Feldman's "Art/Music

Aesthetics", Bernard shows how the composer thought of his work as "between categories" in 1960 Feldman purchased a Rauschenberg painting that was painted black, with newspapers, also painted black, glued to the canvas, and this made him understand, he said, what it was to want "neither life nor art, but something in between".

"I'm involved in static. It's frozen, at the same time it's vibrating," Feldman commented in an admirable description of a quality he admired in Mark Rothko's colour-field canvases. The same idea is present in the 'hidden variation' of his late works – repetition with very subtle variation, following the example of the nomadic aboriginal rugs, where colours of particular areas vary very slightly. As is well known, Feldman looked for soundless attack and decay – he referred to electronic music, which he declared, as having an impact "like neon lights, like plastic paint, it's right on top, whereas I like my paint to seep in a bit". Some of Bernard's claims are questionable – did argue that Mondrian's grid paintings project as illusion of depth without the tangible representation of three-dimensional objects – but the discussion is always thoughtful and provocative. And there are some great anecdotes. In the quality of sound leaving the listener, Feldman looked for an effect he had noticed in abstract paintings – that they only "perform" as the viewer begins to leave them. "Guston asked some friends... to see his recent work at a warehouse. The paintings were like sleeping giants, barely breathing. As the others were leaving I turned for a last look, then said to him, 'There they are. They're up.' They were already engulging the room!"



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On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES LOS ANGELES UCLA

BY TONY HERRINGTON, ANNE HILDE NESEET
A ROD YOUNG

Take one American rock group with the widest open ears in the business, add one British promoter who's made plenty of campers happy at Cember Sands or England's south coast, and another with a history of doing the same at London's South Bank Centre, and you have an organizational dream team for any cutting edge festival. Stage it in a venue that hasn't been tested for an event anywhere near this size or scope and you have the potential for the whole to end up undercooked. Thankfully, this ambitious, four-day incarnation of All Tomorrow's Parties in Los Angeles just about triumphed over its potential logistical nightmares to produce a defining celebration of creative music culture.

Ticketed just under a creek in Sunset Boulevard where it begins its descent to the ocean, the UCLA campus is conveniently sited at a spot which simultaneously summons visions of many of rock's historic beginnings and endings as far as the ATP concerts, they took place in two of the university's music venues: the hangar-like Ackerman Grand Ballroom and the smaller, more theatrical Royce Hall. The venues were designed to house thousands, but, clearly unused to policing events moving heavy and unending human traffic between venues, ATP's security arrangements on the first few nights were abysmally hand-drawn: you needed tickets for the rest room, then had to wade in to get back in if you wanted to drink, you had to finish it in the bar before returning to the music—how rock 'n' roll is that?

Security issues aside, the first night's line-up, peppered with Beat-era survivors, had Ray Romano's stamp all over it. In his solo work, as well as his contributions to the Sonic Youth songbook, Romano has deepened the romantic, buxomizing legacy of earlier generations of Beat poets, writers and performers, here represented in spoken word recitals by Ian Cohen and former White Panther Party leader John Sinclair.

Before they could take the mic, however, we had the tantalizing prospect of an appearance by Gerard Malanga, another East Coast counterculture survivor, in his case, from the conveyor belt of Andy Warhol's original Factory floor. A poetry reading in the velvet-covered hall surrounded by Rayne Hall felt a long way from badger sessions with Iggy and Superstar, or whip-dancing with the Velvet Underground. But Malanga looked the part, and confounded expectations by informing us of a work-in-

progress, "a tribute to the actor John Thaw, also known as Inspector Morse." Listening to his luscious, coffee shop performance party in this environment was a bit like watching a Sengle Loose epic on a handheld TV, any original thought or detail that might have gone into the work was thoroughly obliterated by the medium.

In Cohen and John Sinclair got over the incongruity of the venue by virtue of some graded stage presence and, in Sinclair's case, by supplementing his animated readings with a trumpet and saxophone pairing blowing serpentine jazz obbligatos through texts that accrued into a series of postcolonial eulogies to Allen Ginsberg, Charlie Parker and the night's headliner act, Cecil Taylor.

As it turned out, Cecil, along with Lydia Lunch, played the disruptive interludes in the dusty wayward. He began his set by reciting Kurt Schwitters' like nonsense verse from the wings, his strangled phonemes and aphoristic vocal trills drifting spookily across the empty stage, before presiding to the piano stool for a fantastic, hour-long solo recital, in which notes cascaded in translucent waves of melody; or they were hammered tight into dense dissonances. Earlier, Lydia, being Lydia, had treated the stage as a soap box and the audience as a bunch of motherfuckers: folks who needed a lesson in the merriment of American political life. You couldn't argue with the thrust of her 20-minute non-stop rant, nor shut out the hurricane force of its delivery, but raked Lydia's life being beaten around the head with a stick.

Friday's first highlight came as Kim Gordon wheeled out her growing quartet with Huey Mon, DJ Dave and Jim O'Rourke. The four turned on a more chiseled and directed set than on their SYRS CD last year. Olive, meticulous as a pellet training feature and anchoring tones, maddened his snarling into the group's dark and brooding Roshko washes of charcoal and burnt umbers. Gordon finally whipped out a trumpet, dropping onto her back and blasting a series of grunts and wails upwards to the ceiling and beyond.

Spotting a brand new machine, Eddie Vedder, as SYRuddy from the last Pearl Jam tour, sat on a stool snailwalking with a charmed audience and playing unplugged Grunge versions on what he called "speed trash ukulele." Then came two history lessons: The briefly reformatted television was the first example of a reunion that completely melted the apocryphal time preserving them as forever 1977. Tom Verlaine and co. spirited through past hanging-around wonders like "An't that Nothing," "How Big," "Weiss," "See No Evil" and "Little Johnny Moon," culminating with an extended "Marquee Moon," which they all seemed reluctant to conclude.

The second rejuvenating blast from the past was a scratch band assembled around Sleazy guitarist Ron Asheton. Although his trio with Myrtenheim/Freese bassist Mike Watt and Dinosaur Jr. frontman J Mascis could have been

pure cabaret, with Watt stepping in for Iggy as vocalist, the Sleazyes sprang pulled through, as ever protected by their legendary dumbness. Their monotony and pummeling power has ensured they retain all their vitality—and Ron's wheezing, flailing guitar solo was a can of ass kicks. With Kim Gordon losing her voice singing "I Wanna Be Your Dog," the long day closed under weary manners.

With UCLA students attending quiet study groups in an adjacent room, Saturday's programme in the wood-paneled Kendrick Hall seemed calloused to bring an emergency meeting at the Faculty Senate's Torrance (Morrow and Russell Maxwell) made as much noise as humanly possible, yet no curfew was necessary, as their hall full of layered digital noise and fuzzy hum was surprisingly gentle on the ears. Reece Gladman's DJI synthwave and perussion-filled to ignore, while Pita's laptoptery produced his usual thicket of digital thrums. Playing along with recordings of his own violin, Tony Conrad's dreamy but melodious vibrations induced a nosedive in one listener at least.

Over at Royce, Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo was revelling in feedback as he scragged his guitar along the stage, accompanied by partner Leah Senger's visuals of slowed down fireworks, Mats Gustafsson's breathy tongueflutterer sax and Kevin Drumm's electronics. California's debutant, downtown imitators worked well live. Ray Henratty-Courry rock made weird and funky by explosive trums of drumming and a mayday Fender Rhodes. Portland's Jackie O Motherfucker cranked up the tension, their rolling and unpredictable fire improvisations, hatched and burnished with metallic guitars, made imaginative leaps into the visionary unknown. A backing video with a camera panning Star Wreck-like through a pine forest, glimpsing shrouded figures in the mist, added to the sinister mood.

While the Royce stage was occupied with Pope M, Alex Chilton's Big Star (another reformatted outfit who miraculously managed to replicate the gold jangle of their mid-70s Sister Lovers like they recorded it yesterday) and Wilco, the Ackerman Hall line-up was more eclectic. Once heavyweight rap duo Cam'ron & appeared, a dedicated body of (mainly white) students crowded at the front of the stage to check Vast Aire and Vondra Megalia's otherwise mellow. Deep enough to wake Thor, the bass blasted these infatoc tales from the self-proclaimed sons of Africa, who took the sophistication and complexity of their recorded output for pure hatching muscle and no-fills low end. Halfway through, Vast and Megalia left the stage to give accompanying DJ Caps a chance to show off. Athletically demonstrating different miasm techniques, he first did the nasty and then followed it up by throwing drum CDs to a voracious audience. Following the various agitations of Chicago free jazzer Fred Anderson and Malibu's Loopyack

posse, all got loose/drum/guitar trio Sleater-Kinney stormed through an unashamedly rocking set, with SY members nodding approvingly in the wings. If the curators of the festival were worried there were not enough women in the programme (see SY interview, The Wire 2/17), Sleater-Kinney did their bit to throw off some serious tits-to-the-wall rock.

No one could match Yarnsuka Eyi's current perussion-dominated Boredoms line-up, however. Harnessing the energies of three drummers, Eyi took the role of shamanistic conductor, the bastard child of Toscanini and Keith Emerson punching synths and serpents into the feculent tangle of splashing cymbals. Running like Lubov's concept of rhythmic monotony through the fastest spin cycle, this was an unrelenting, brutally effective ritual with the hypnotic trance-out potential to get the audience waking on hot coils.

Aphex Ken's set was like Elysia Wide Skut produced by PJ Bannum. Accompanied by two strapping midgeys and a masked dancer in a white sheet painted with the phrase "We Above So Below," Richard James hunched at the back of the stage fingering his laptop delivering his all too familiar dill 'n' bass and thumping, dorky Techno.

Sunday was mostly pure hardcore, from veteran campaigners Saccharine Trust via New Zealand's Dead C and Mike Watt's muscular new outfit The Screamers. Like a geography mistress pandering mid-lesbian, former teacher Peaches rapped out her notorious lyrics while dancing and kicking, while vocal artist Stacy Boyle drew quick, megalithic cartoon sketches live on an overhead projector, a giant hand 'stripping' the singer's proffered posterior, an 'air guitar' for her to pose with. With strapping moves and an outfit to match, Peaches danced a thin line between pure nihilism and its subversion. A shame, then, that tonight's mild mannered crowd, whose sober yelps were their only gaudy signs of atmosphere, did little to heat up the atmosphere. They showed more enthusiasm for Stereolab's uncomplicated rage, enlivened with the recent addition of Laetitia Sadier's tambore.

Who else but our hosts Sonic Youth could flash up this four day nerve? Looking genuinely excited and relieved by the way the ATP had shaped up, the five-piece delivered a set containing a large chunk of the forthcoming Murry Street LP it was fascinating how many of the lines down over the festival converged and knotted in their newest music. Jim O'Rourke's presence on bass has allowed a tantalizing freewheel to emerge between the three guitarists of Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo and Kim Gordon, which blossomed and curled in the newest pieces in a style that recalled the churning string interplay of Television's Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd. And the enduring presence of their 20 year old "She Is Not Alone" served as a testimony to Sonic Youth's position as the backbone of 20 years of American underground music making. □

Long day's light till tomorrow: Top row: Aphex Twin, Jackie O Motherfucker, Boredoms 2nd row: Television, Marzouk, Yarnsuka Eyi 3rd row: Peaches, two views of Cecil Taylor Bottom row: Eddie Vedder, Tony Conrad, Ian O'Rourke & Kim Gordon



Top: John Oswald and Michael Gira at Oskore Le Nigbis. Bottom: Chance encounters at Simultaneous Silence

SIMULTANEOUS SILENCE BERLIN STUDIOS NALEPASTRASSE GERMANY

BY RAHMA KHAYAM

Anniversary celebrations are all too often superficial, lockstep affairs designed more to boost a composer's recent sales than to explore new facets of his career. Thankfully, this was not the case at Simultaneous Silence, the recent Berlin retrospective commemorating the tenth anniversary of John Cage's death. Curator and musicologist Volker Straebel focused on a specific period in Cage's career, highlighting the ideas he was exploring at that time in a 12 hour marathon that yielded fresh insights into both the man and his music.

Taking place in the sumptuous Studios Nalepastasse, a jewel of 1950s East German architecture, the programme of concerts, performances, films and installations addressed the topic of simultaneity and silence in John Cage's work in the 50s. The theme of silence was illustrated first and foremost by Cage's classic 1952 composition "433", which demonstrated that silence is not the absence of sound and that a performance is also made up of ambient sounds. The piece was interpreted by ambient

performers every hour on the hour throughout the day. While abiding by Cage's stipulation that it should not contain any intentional sounds, many of the performers came up with novel interpretations. German composer Hans Reich exploited the freedom of movement allowed by the piece by spinning round in his swivel chair at the beginning of each of the three sections, while the string trio who performed an hour later placed their instruments on stage and sat among the audience, joining them in their listening experience. Veteran Cage performer Margaret Leng Tan, on the other hand, performed the classic version of the piece, opening and closing the lid of her toy piano to mark the different movements in a symbolic and moving homage to her mentor. As the performances succeeded one another, it slowly became clear that the silence of a pianist can conjure up a very different mental image to that of a violinist.

The programme's second main thematic thrust, simultaneity, was highlighted in the performance of *Time Length Pieces* (1953-56). Consisting of a number of instrumental solos played simultaneously, it featured virtuoso performances by Stefan Schläpfer on piano, Frances-Marie Uitti on cello and Robyn Schikowsky on percussion. Cage had previously

experimented with the concept at the controversial event he organised in 1952 at Black Mountain College in North Carolina: the participants came out completely unrelated activities simultaneously, illustrating his view that art should be as unpredictable and fragmentary as daily life.

The programme also stressed other aspects of Cage's work. The performance of *Radio Music* (1956) was a particularly graphic example of Cage's use of chance: here, random snatches of sound made up of a German weather report, the odd burst of English, women's voices and mysterious disks wafted through space as eight radio operators sat intently twisting the dials of their antique 50s radio sets in accordance with a 'score' made up of shortwave frequencies and durations. As for *Fontana Mix* (1958), it marked a new stage in the composer's gradual withdrawal from the compositional process: its score consisting of sheets of paper inscribed with lines or points could give rise to any number of different realisations largely determined by the performer. Several composed realisations of *Fontana Mix* were performed that evening. Christian Wolff presented a sparse, moody version for trumpet, percussion, double bass and live electronics, while James Tenney came up

with a subdued, mournful composition for six string instruments and a delay system. Matthew Rogalsky's version was the most original however. His piece for three laptop players turned a variety of sounds including whale noises, digging, fire and crowds into a spacious soundscape punctuated by sweetening crackles and groans.

Other memorable moments included Frances-Marie Uitti's convincing and inspired reading of Cage's lecture *On Nothing* and Margaret Leng Tan's performance of *One 2*, a piece Cage composed specially for her. Moving gracefully between three imposing Steinways whose damper pedals had been wedged so that the strings could vibrate freely, she drew deep, resonant sounds from her instruments. Her polished, well-honed interpretation stood in stark contrast to the concluding event by experimental performance artist Sam Ashley. Ashley sat crouched over a microphone in the dark, surrounded by 26 transistor radios to which a mass of wires acting as antennas were attached at random points. As he spoke, his voice spewed off haphazard bursts and random crackles, coiling to mind the unstructured chaos of everyday life and demonstrating the creativity of chance. John Cage would have no doubt approved. □

OBLIQUE LU NIGHTS NANTES LE LIEU UNIQUE

FRANCE

BY DAVID KEENEAN

Housed in Le Lieu Unique, a glorious warehouse space that was once a biscuit factory and is now an arts centre with its own bar, restaurant and bookshop, the Oblique Lu Nights festival presented two nights of fairly eclectic new sound with an emphasis on artists who have had some kind of connection to the industrial underground over the past three decades. Although at times the programming felt too heavily motivated by nostalgia for the past achievements of fringe musicians like Genesis P-Orridge and Jim Thirlwell, whose contemporary work has shown little of the spark that animated their early projects, there were other wildcard choices like US-based psychedelic singer-songwriter Greg Weeks who, despite looking as incongruous as a Beatles fan, at least on paper, sees spectacularity to the occasion. Either that or his standards had been entirely decimated by the time he hit the stage on the second night.

Things started off on a real high with a solo acoustic set from ex-Swan Michael Gira. Despite only having six strings to fall back on, Gira filled the cavernous hall with the weight of his blues

Caught in a cone of white light in the middle of a pitch-black stage, he contorted his features as he tore vocals from his belly, showering the people nearest the stage with sweat and spit. Whereas Swans dealt in epic melancholy, Gira's new material felt much more intimate, while retaining every bit as physically and emotionally heavy as his earlier amplified rock.

John Oswald's plunderphonic set picked a weird emotional punch as it drew heavily from his current re-working of *Pleasure*, a collage of overlapping snippets from various worthless 80s and 90s short hits that combine in a satisfying indictment of your entire adolescence. As a live sonic experience, however, it fell somewhat flat. As it was impossible to grasp all the minute sonic detail encrypted deep within the recording, the performance failed to transcend the intellectual exercise. Oswald moved from his laptop to a performance piece where he gesticulated wildly towards the audience as if to hammer home a point while ranting into a mic. After some five minutes, you realised he was actually just musingly gibbering like he was speech reflections. Again, it was more like he was simply making a point, not art. In contrast, Imani Schmidt's duo with UK techno producer Kuma, aka Jono Postmore, suffered from being

completely pointless. Schmidt's piano work was stubby and lacked any kind of fluid grace. As a result, his tumbling assegesos never really achieved orbit. Kuma's entire contribution to the set appeared to be his ability to match a stunningly average drum machine pattern to whatever tempo Schmidt started off in. The combined effect was mind numbing.

Jac Berrocal is still best known, when at all, for his contributions to Runa with World's second album, *To The Quiet Man From A Tiny Girl*, and for ferociously "Rock 'N' Roll Station", which is NW1 famously covered. Yet his back catalogue boasts countless moments of inventive power, especially his 1976 Dada jazz album, *Penséables*, which was dedicated to Luigi Russolo. However, his Saturday night performance saw him disappointingly anchored. He was joined by a self-consciously new wave guitarist, complete with leather trousers, and a synthomix wedding percussionist, both of whom were so ploddingly metronomic that Berrocal's horn and catch playing felt dead and formulaic.

Genesis P-Orridge's *True Majesty* suffered a similar fate. P-Orridge is much more of a catalyst and lightning rod than he is a musical innovator, and so necessarily relies heavily on the collaborators gathered around him at the time. In

Larry Tishner and Bryn Dall, on electronics and guitar respectively, he handed down two fawning, uninspired fads much too in awe to ever take it upon themselves to push the music somewhere else. So we got baggy basslines and half-hearted feedback freakouts, in between P-Orridge's usual monologues about pornography and control, all played out on a stage set that looked suspiciously like it was lifted from a mid-70s episode of *Are You Being Served?*

As Baby Zoom, Jim Thirlwell, aka Fortius, and Cap Shoot Cop's Jim Coleman plumed new depths in bloodless lepto damped music, with both looking like they'd sunk into comas behind their faces. It was left to guitarist and vocalist Greg Weeks, supported by a punk bass player, to pump some blood into the night. Although his set consisted of songs that in any other context I would have dismissed as lo-fi approximations of Nick Drake, coming near the end of a weekend of very long nights, they sounded like celestial paeans to neo-cynical, human interaction.

Oblique Lu Nights has the potential to make every performance a special event. But they'd better focus their programmes on those contemporary artists with spirit to burn, rather than load them with the burnt out spirits that dominated this year's bill.

TAKU SUGIMOTO/MARK WASTELL/RHODRI DAVIES LONDON SOUND 323

UK

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Two days before this show at a North London record shop, guitarist Taku Sugimoto and Konk Pack had played to an appreciative crowd at the Spex, where Sugimoto's calm note-spelling and Konk Pack's crunchy electronics provided an interesting contrast in styles. But at Sound 323 the contrast was between the murmuring music being played in the basement and rush-hour traffic grinding noisily along the A96way Road.

Harpet Rhodri Davies, cellist Mark Wastell and Sugimoto played a spacious 20 minute set. Wastell had a lapicid clock wedged under his cello strings, but he made the cello purr by lightly scrubbing the body of the instrument with a small block of polystyrene. Sugimoto applied a wain bow to a length of heavy gauge wire fixed perpendicularly to the neck of his acoustic guitar. Their nearly inaudible textural play was punctuated by spatially distributed single notes from Davies's harp. The music had presence, though it seemed to consist of almost nothing but troubled silences.

Wastell and Davies have been exploring this

reduced but non-restrictive soundworld for several years, and they and various colleagues in London and Berlin are gradually changing the lingua franca of traditional live improvisation. What's interesting is how these developments have been mirrored elsewhere: Sugimoto's first solo recording, *Opposite*, sounds like Morton Feldman meets Wes Montgomery at the grass roots of Zen. Since then, Sugimoto has considerably refined his palette of sounds. By January this year, when he and Mark Wastell played at Off Site in Tokyo, he'd pared down his style to the point where very few typical guitar gestures remained.

In fact, the sounds made by the trio at Sound 323 could probably have been produced on almost any instrument. If you closed your eyes, it was almost impossible to discern who was playing what; the music was equally deceptive. Was it really as quiet as it seemed to be, or is most music simply too loud? Sugimoto played out a solitary note and, seconds later, Davies softly drew a violin bow along the frame of his harp. The connection between these two events was obscure but meaningful. Wastell began to stroke his cello strings with a short length of dowl. In the end, the music quietly trumpeted over the traffic noise.

KEITH TIPPETT & PETER FAIRCLOUGH GATESHEAD CAEDMON HALL

UK

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In the unlikely venue of Gateshead Public Library West Country, ex-King Crimson pianist Keith Tippett and Sheffield-based percussionist Peter Fairclough delivered some compelling, intimate free improv. The established duo first came to my attention through their album *Wild Sak*, a delightful release that featured mostly brief, spontaneous creations full of character. The live

performances were more explorative but the essential concept remained – melodic free improv with percussion acting as colour rather than groove. Fairclough played trap kit plus various exotics: a gong, tambores, something reminiscent of Henry Threadgill's tubaphone (made of many thighbags), crotales, and various other "little instruments". The piano was prepared unexpectedly, not fixed in advance as Cage prescribed, with Tippett letting objects loose on the piano strings during the course of the performance.

The duo's work illustrates the fluidity of the free

jazz/improv divide. Abstract, free structures were set alongside the most gorgeous, jazz harmonies. Where Fairclough focused mostly on brushes, Tippett has a wide stylistic range, but doesn't try to iron out jazz references, and some unexpected influences revealed themselves. His high-energy playing was at times surprisingly modal, in the style developed by McCoy Tyner, while more exotic elements were reminiscent of Alice Coltrane; impressionistic textures showed hints of Chopin and the classical tradition. Fittingly, the material was varied, including an out of kilter blues and a children's song, and the first half

ended with the briefest, most poignant of rap ballads, just a few bars long.

In the second half the playing was more spent, with more varied percussion textures and the piano less dominant. Fairclough moved away from the drum kit, and at one point dramatically wielded a two-handed football rattle. At the end of the performance, Tippett played against a wind-up music box winding down. It was a witty and ingenious gesture. Something similar to this very satisfying musical premises to be captured on the duo's live album *Imagis*, out soon on the ASC label.

On Location



No lovebytes for this bunch (clockwise from top left): Massimo, Yasuno Tono and Robert Lippok

LOVEBYTES FESTIVAL SHEFFIELD SHOWROOM UK

BY IAIN D. RUSSELL

Some festivals are full of great content but lack atmosphere. Others end up as lousy social gatherings centred around the bar but not the programme. Anyone who has worked on a festival knows that getting the right mix between the two is a success in itself. Having visited Sheffield's Lovebytes Festival for three years in a row, I can safely report that it delivers on both grounds every time. A part of its success lies in its choice of venue. The Showroom, with its two cinemas that double up as live performance space, small bookshop, a bar and workshop areas successfully accommodate Lovebytes' panoptical programme of live events, talks, screenings, DJ sets and exhibitions.

This year's incarnation offered a three day medley of children's Lego animation, laptop electronics, rare screenings of avant garde animation, music videos and net cinema. Saturday evening kicked off with a multimedia performance by Mega artist Massimo — a full half-hour of structured electronic noise accompanied by live visuals complete with dry ice. Taking an ironic attitude towards the geek fetishism associated with laptop electronics, the Italian noise provocateur delivered a grinding set accompanied by images of fire, exploding

airplanes interspersed with pornographic imagery. His nerdy humour, of the kind revealed by the title of his debut CD, *Hey Babe, Let Me See Your USB And I'll Show You My Firewall*, unfortunately didn't translate in his po-faced live performance.

Massimo was followed by a solo performance by Robert Lippok, one third of the German electronic trio To Rococo Rot. It took a few moments to adjust to Lippok's minimal textured soundscape after Massimo's sensory overload. His set conjured up images of fetidous landscapes, a walk down empty office corridors, filled with discarded sounds of typewriters and slamming doors. Lippok provided the audience with a much needed antidote to the previous event.

The highlight of the evening, however, was the performance of Japanese improv pioneer Yasuno Tono. Active in the Fluxus movement since the early 60s, Tono was one of the first Japanese artists to compose "event" music (multimedia performance happenings), and has collaborated with the likes of John Cage and Nam June Paik, as well as having composed numerous scores for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. His recent work draws on elements of post-structural theory in combination with visual representations of Eastern texts. Tono's Lovebytes performance consisted of a screening of *Molecular Music* and



Three Poems of the Tang Dynasty and electronic music triggered by light sensors which were suspended in front of the screen. The light of the film, a collage of Chinese Grade B movies and poetry extracts with images of daily life and newspaper cuttings, generated different levels of noise according to the amount of light in the image, creating a contrasting soundscape to the poetic and meditative imagery.

Music videos never fail to pull a crowd, so unsurprisingly the best attended event of the festival proved to be the Warp Shorts programme. The screening was mostly made up of best of videos received in response to an open call for submissions. This invitation inspired a small army of Warp fans to submit an endless stream of techno-porn, (read: deconstructed industrial manuals, 3D flythroughs, fetishised cyborgs with large breasts raging through barren landscapes). Warp Shorts also screened Vincent Gallo's video for "Honey Bunny", a track on his recent album *When "Honey Bunny" left me with a dilemma not dissimilar to what parents must go through when a child spits at dinner guests in a desperate desire to get attention. Is it best to engage with it, or to ignore it?* Gallo's close-ups of female bodies positioned on a revolving surface in front of a static camera were surely meant to be read with a pinch of salt. Or could it be that Gallo genuinely meant to make a video of dismembered women? At a festival like this, it

would have been nice to escape 'lots 'n' ass' pictures. Gallo thwarted that dream.

Seven artists received Lovebytes commissions to create new works. Vicki Bennett (aka People Like Us) used hers to create her first standalone video piece. Moving away from her usual output of live performance, she screened and discussed her video *We Edit Life*. Like her sound work, it was spliced from found imagery, inspiring bouts of nostalgia for a past that never happened. Here, Bennett masterfully creates a fictional history of electronic music, where robots appear in scientific demonstrations and orchestras unexpectedly acquire new members. Essentially it's a contribution of the work Bennett has been developing for several years from material in the Pelinger Archives, but *We Edit Life* on its own felt somewhat impoverished, at least compared with the intensity and humour of her live shows.

The Calculated And Electronic Pioneers strand of the festival offered some rare opportunities to hear Terry Riley's soundtrack for the Whitney Brothers' stunning abstract animations, as well as Richard Linklater's *Waking Life*, consisting of videos compiled by twirling the Net.

As one of the very few, if not only UK festivals equally proficient in presenting both digital music and the visual arts, Lovebytes once again provided a home for programming hybrids which rarely happen elsewhere.

PINSKI ZOO/BLURT LONDON 93 FEET EAST

BY BEN WATSON

The poster told us that No Immortal, a club night run by Kingfish Records of Bedouin Ascent, was featuring two "agendas" who have "influenced a legion of techno legends, breakbeat and HiTop experimentalists". The organisers had managed to convert authentic live-ups, too: Pinski Zoo comprised the quartet who cut 1990's *East Rail East*, the Zoo's first release. Jon Kapinski (piano and tenor sax), Steve Little (keyboards), Cut Wesley Bingham (electric bass) and Steve Harris (drums). Kapinski hasn't only leapt from Ornette Coleman how to shuffle a groove into freedom, he's also learned to true the family his son Stefan Kapinski's electric bass fitted in beautifully. Blurt were Ted Mison (piano, vocal, violin), Steve Eagles (guitar) and Paul Watkins (drums), the trio who cut the wonderful *Poppycock* in 1986. It was heartening to see these two groups — being followed by a scene which cyber theory tells us has transcended any affection for music played in real time.

Pinski Zoo play a jagged, reconstructed boogie music which manages to add all kinds of problems which forced past Miles Davis fusion Kapinski not heightened of similarity, and some of his themes come direct out of Polish folk song and the Gene Autry-style tenor-Hammond strip joint tradition. But the rhythm section is

never cast into a subsistent role. In the authentic P-Funk manner, the quartet turn their instruments into a drum circle. With Stefan laying down a heavy 'one' (this into "Polish Journey" managed to involve both Deep Purple and dub, something even Davis never quite achieved). Bingham is free to cavort in the upper register, coming on like a cello and even a lead guitar. He has his harmonic drops down, his thumbed motifs dinging and gitting just like his persistent smile. While it is possible for the guitar, discordant aspect of the Zoo, a panic nightmare dreamed by Joe Zawul. His jamming, determined, beat chords chase away the classical that usually invites keyboard contributions. A track from Ghost Music, Kapinski's spooked-out solo album, was almost unbearably sick and scary. Drummer Steve Harris makes sure each beat feels like an attack, there's no pausing in the Zoo's harmonic thinking, and none in the rhythm department either. Faced with this twirling, defiant, East European dance machine, the audience seemed unsure whether to dance or lie down and die, which seemed quite correct.

With Blurt, the audience knew exactly what to do: stand in a line and stare at this singular group leader. Ted Mison has his eye on every little alarm. You know you must pay keen attention to this demerited lion master, part gleeful madman and part dictator. The music is inevitably forceful, loose-boned and efficient. Eagles has perfected the lion look of the veteran punk. The relentless yet springy attack of his

distorted guitar kept everything in its grip. Wings is the straight man of the group, keeping edgely perfect beats while the others mangle their boogie prodigies. Mison drank a half-bottle of scotch in breaks during the set, which cheered perfectly with his old guitar's sput, braces and outflung shirt... and Mochan. A member of the audience complained that we couldn't make out the words, but Mochan's devious poses — silhouette for the blurted sax breaks, frozen graces of pleading and dinky — were hard enough. There is currently a wave of art theorists arguing that "performance art" was the secret dynamo of artistic radicalism over the last three decades. The art posse will have to look hard to come up with anything as visually arresting as Mison's series of wing statues.

The last time I saw Blurt, Mison had more musicians in tow, and came across like a UK version of James Chance. No matter how powerful, the two men can't manage the flood similarly of harmonies. After an hour, Blurt's cartoon simplicity — so Professor Brainstorm, so Carry On, so British — can seem a little bleak, but it's so rare to see anything so single-minded and achieved on a stage, you have to remain watching. When the last is made of the authentic whorls of Kurt Schwitters' line of subversive nonsense — origins who question the power relations of rhetoric, and unleash torrents of humour and independent thought into the grain bag of wealth and power — Ted Mison will require a special place!

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NEW YORK, NEW SOUNDS, NEW SPACES LYON MUSEE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

FRANCE

BY RAYMOND KHAZAM

New York has played a crucial part in the history of sound art. But while such pioneering precursors of the genre as John Cage and Fluxus were widely recognised and appreciated, contemporary New York sound artists are little known over here. The New York, New Sounds, New Spaces exhibition in Lyon was a welcome opportunity to take stock of their work. Curated by musician and sound artist Stephen Vilella, it brought together pieces by a wide range of artists, reflecting the trends and ideas that constitute New York's sound art scene today.

Without being tentatively cutting edge, the pieces on show in Lyon exhibited very different sensibilities and approaches. Some were unabashedly poetic, others focused on sounds specific to New York, while several of them put new or old technologies to creative use. That said, the majority displayed a freshness and quirky humour that is lacking in much contemporary sound art. Humming Bird Feeder, one of two pieces by Vilella, turned a small perforated space into an eerie dreamscape while green and blue lights cast mysterious shadows on the walls, promising bad noises alternated with moments of silence, spinning a

surrealistic tapestry of sound. Camera Natura by John Hudak was equally imaginative. Looking inside an old camera, the viewer perceived a live black and white video image of trees outside the museum. A computer program tracked the movements of the branches, which triggered slight changes in a static sound coming from inside the camera bellows. This piece used digital tools to detect and amplify natural phenomena, while playing new technologies off against old ones. Susan Philipsz's *Daggy Standart* was in a more nostalgic vein. For this piece, the artist recorded herself singing David Bowie's "Daggy Standart" a capella. It was a poignant experience: she did not perform the song but instead sang it, quietly to herself, her voice evoking memories of times past, even as it stressed the impossibility of reliving them.

World Trade Centre Recordings. Words After Hurricane Floyd, which used specifically New York sounds, was the strongest work in the show. This second piece by Vilella consisted of sounds recorded on the 91st floor of Tower One of the WTC in September 1999, the morning after a violent hurricane swept through the city. Compact microphones affixed to the windows picked up the sounds of passing aeroplanes, radio frequencies and the vibrations of the building. High volume throats and hums enveloped visitors as soon they entered the installation, while the creaks and groans produced by the slight movements of the building highlighted the WTC's

vulnerability, a prescient impression borne out by recent events.

Michael J Schumacher's Room Piece likewise bombarded visitors with sound, pulsating, continually changing sounds derived from a 2D second hand game space moved around the room, playing continuously while two laser beams reflected by mirrors of glass cast kaleidoscopic patterns on the walls. Although the sounds and visuals were unrelated, after a period of time the music appeared to interact with the changing light patterns. Less successful were David Albr's piece, which consisted of a series of aluminum plates emitting drone-inducing music, and Laurie Anderson's *Popper Motel*, the CD-ROM she released in 1995, at a time when its offbeat animations and quirky images had not yet lost their freshness. In any sense, this piece was symptomatic of the exhibition itself: it offered much to titillate the eye and ear but little that was fundamentally new. The recent Frequencies (Hi) exhibition in Frankfurt proposed a radically new aesthetic, it featured uncompromisingly impersonal works by Carsten Nicolai and Carl Michael von Haussloff. Hearing back to the minimalist aesthetic, these artists stripped their pieces of references and expressive content, reducing them to their very essence. The New York scene may not be quite as challenging or as brazenly experimental, but as the exhibition in Lyon showed, it nevertheless retains the power to move people!

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk

Compiled by Phil England



Ethereal body: Cornelius

UK Festivals

ETHER

The alternative electronic music series continues with Jeff Mills providing an original score for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, plus Suser, Collider and Radio Boy live and Oi Si Segg (1 May), Jah Wobble and Graham Massey's *Twisted* (2), an evening of plundered and sampled music from People Like Us, Felix Kubin, Matt Ward, Wobley and Evolution Control Committee (4). Japan's pip wonderboy Cornelius, The Gentle People, Loper and The Siren Suite (6), and there's free pre-show music the same evening (4-7pm) from BJ Cole, Instrumental and Puppomastaz. There is also a series of workshops and lectures on software, programming and technology (5-6, at Great Eastern Hotel), London Royal Festival Hall, 1-6 May, 020 7562 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Second annual festival celebrating London's thriving improvised music scene. Full line-up is as follows: Procession 1, Matt Davis & Mark Wastall, Muggie Noddy's *Mus In May* ensemble perform live improvisation plus collage pieces by John Stevens (3 May, 7pm), Chris Barn & Matthew Hutchinson duo, Roger Smith solo and

Birdjak, Louis Mokolo Quintet (4, 3pm), Phil Minton & Roger Turner, Trevor Watts & Verjan Weston, Sylvia Hallert and Evan Parker & John Russell (4, 7-30pm), Resonance, Charlotte Hug & Pat Thomas, Pm, Lol Coxhill, Paul Rutherford & Ian Smith trio (5, 3pm), London Improvisers Orchestra performing live improvisations and pieces directed by Steve Beresford, Terry Day, Simon H Fell, Caroline Kraabel, Paul Rutherford and Dewi Tucker (5, 7-30pm), Anton Lukoszevich & Eddie Prevost, Procession 2, Furt (6, 3pm), John Tibbary performs works by Ken Edwards and Samuel Beckett, Menemth Popsale Project, Catapult, Coleman, Edwards & Priestall quartet (6, 7-30pm), London Conway Hall, 3-6 May, £10/£8 per concert, £15/£9 per day, £40/£25 season ticket, www.matchesandrecordings.com, www.entranceticket.com

International Festivals

ADVENTURES

Three evenings of new collaborations between musicians from New York and Chicago. John McMeine/Kele Morley/Zenia Parkins, (15 May), Carmela Du'Isle/Steve 217 (16) and Fred Anderson/Chris Taylor/Marc Ribot (17). New York Leonard Nimoy Thalia at Peter Norton Symphony

Space, 7-30pm & 10pm, 001 212 864 5400, www.symphonyspace.org

ANGELICA

ITALY

Sven Åke Johansson, Peter Brötzmann, Kathleen Delaney, Hamid Drake, Marie Gayette, Misha Mengelberg, Sten Sundell, Ingrid Honsinger, Ilana Honsinger, Aleks Kolkowski, Massimo Simonini and many others. Bologna, 0039 051 374877, www.aaa-inglea.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE

19th edition of this excellent New Music festival. Line-up includes Keith Tippett's Tapestry orchestra, Metabow versus Pan Sonic, Cecil Taylor/Bill Dwyer/Gary Daley, Melfi Berana, The Neckers, Anne Gosfield, Set Fire To Flames, Fred Frith/Juan Jeanrenaud/Wyke Makioka/Larry Ochs, Peggy Lee/Marilyn Leiner/Hamid Drake/Gary Hemingway, Lee Ranicki/William Hooker/Alan Licht/Ulrich Kneegler/DJ Olive, Polwechsel, Peter Kowald/William Parker, Bob Dolezal/Pierre Hilbert, David Kristian/Sam Shalaby/Alexandre St-Onge, Eugene Chadbourne/Rand Lussier, Sakoto Fuji/Tatsuya Yoshida, Mutsa Mutsa vocal choir and many more. Victoriaville venues venues, 16-20 May, times/prices vary

001 819 752 7912, www.fmvap.org

FEZ FESTIVAL OF WORLD SACRED MUSIC

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MDERS MUSIC

GERMANY

This year's line up includes Lucky Rankin's African Jazz Allstars, 4 Walls, Moscow Art Trio, Locus Solvus & Napoli's Walls, Erik M & Philip Jack, Lucas Niggli Zoom, Iku, Deho's "Dommage À Glenn", Vienna Art Orchestra, Benbow Jazz from Guinea, King Sunny Ades and Queen Salawa Abeni from Nigeria, Banks Kover & LaOla Orchestra from Serbia, Roots and Wires featuring Oi M Single plus Oi I-Sound, Orner Sese Orner Sente from Cuba, Shibusse Shibusse Orchestra presents The Magic World of Daisuke Fuke, Günter Christmann's improvised music, poetry and dance project Can Motz, and an electronic lounge risks project featuring Frank Schulte, Eikehard Ehlers, Jon St. Werner, Anthony Moore and Geag Odik Moore. 17-20 May, 0049 28 41 201 722, info@moers-music.com, www.moers-festival.com

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musiqueaction
13 - 20 may 2002

Louise Maréchal, Jérôme Nozieres,
"Le Cube", "Mouche Jordan", "Midi"
"Phosphor", "Roue de l'Inde"
Fred From, Waga Moussaie, Lenny Soto,
Maccaron, Delacour, Roger Turian,
Lui, Capelli, Jean-Camille,
Peppe Urban, Abdel Sadik Selam,
"Quatre Ventes", George Lewis,
"Ong Kallay", "Ong Kallay",
"La Queen Rock", "Angeles"
Emmanuel Piant, Thierry Madiet,
Isabelle Dufour, Jacques Di Donato,
Kenny Charles, Tom Ingham,
Chris Cullen, Matthew Chompre,
Ghersi Paquette, "Soul Power"
"Mouche Jordan", "La Queen",
David Chene, Jean-Luc Guennat,
Li-Ping Tang, Esther Farnes,
Marcelle Alenberger, Spinoza Mouton,
"Quatre Ventes", "Midi"
"Quatre Ventes", "Midi"
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Rafaela Gomes, Stephanie Ross,
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13.14.15 June

9th Barcelona International Festival of Advanced Music and Multimedia Art

live acts: pet shop boys, yo la tengo, lamb, radioboy, anti-pop consortium, luomo, arto Lindsay, christian marclay, balago.

dj sets: jeff mills, carl cox, arthur baker, roger sánchez, funk d'void, oscar mulero, alison goldrapp, mr scruff

showcases: morr music presents: saan (live), isaac (live), lali pons (live), thomas morr (dj), niny tune presents: bonobo (live), dk (solid state) (dj), cinematic orchestra (live), ngerbeat6 presents: kud66 (live), cox (live), wobbly (live), dj rupture (dj), bptich control presents: allen allen (dj), modeselektor (live), faad (dj)

sonar1ebs: damien lazarus plays city rockers, city centre offices presents static and shôme even, françois k. plays wave music and clicktracks.

An initiative of



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MUSIC GENERA FESTIVAL POLAND

The first international festival of improvised music in Poland! The event puts together one of the groupings of musicians from Australia, America, US and Europe including Michael Moser, Xavier Charles, Jack Stenhouse, Krastoff K. Rott, Nkos Velozes, Tony Buck, Kyle Brookman and others. In addition to these ad hoc groupings there will be a special performance by Chris Blum's Ensemble featuring John Butcher and Rhodin Davies. **Saturday 24-26 May, 0049 91 454 2446, www.lpcfestival.org.pl**

MUSICS ACTION FRANCE

The 10th edition of this New Music festival features everything from Sudanese traditional music to dance, sound sculpture, electronics, film and improvisation. The line-up includes Jérôme Noetinger, Chris Cutler, Le Cube, Melvoin Goldstein, Andrea Neumann/Isabelle Bonaldi, The Recedents, AMM with Formates, John White & Laurent Daillois performing Cornelius Cardew's *Treasure*, Phosphor, Joe Mann, Quetor Helias performing works by George Lewis and Li Quan Nian, Abdel Gader Sekmi & Le Quartier N°1 Sans, Fred Frith/Miya Masaoka/Lony Gots, Peter... with the Minton, Greg Kallay/Rob Barry/Li Quan Nian/Yukio Yokokawa, Martin Blumny/Chris Fuller/Luc Houtkamp, Archipel, and others. **Wednesday 25 May, 13-20 May, centrebislaus.com**

MUTEK CANADA

Five days of concerts and live performances presented in three venues in downtown Montreal. Amongst those to go confirmed: SND, Felix Kubler, Stephen Mathieu, Janek Schaeffer, Bola, Gescom, RadioBoz/Aom Heart, and many others. **Montreal various venues, 20 May-2 June, times/prices vary. 001 514 847 1242, www.mutek.ca**

RABBITA ITALY

Music, theatre and poetry festival featuring Joe Mann, Barre Phillips/Mat Maneri, K-pop, Koffi Menezes, Marzocchi, Sergio Per and others. **Varese, 4-19 May, 0039 0185307760, dis-per@libero.it**

RING RING YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia's truly international new and

traditional music festival. Features Bratiska Bbic & The Medleys from Slovenia, Habet Katic & Barnardo from Mali, Mazi Sallied from Hungary, Venshe De Korenshi (Kusaz), Senegal/India, Yugoslavia's own Rayno Nebo, Stravinsky (Italy/Slovenia/Yugoslavia), Mase Kalmerini & Alogdgar from Finland, Tera Fuki from Czech Republic, Australia's Fra Hutzpeters, Djavan Gasperey from Iran, Armenia, and AMM and Konik Rock from UK. **Belgrade Res, 22-27 May, 00 381 11 328 43 98, www.cybertex.org/singing**

SAN FRANCISCO ALTERNATIVE MUSIC FESTIVAL USA

Insatiable event featuring experimental, improvised, free jazz and electronic music mainly from the US. Featuring Joe McPhee, India Cooke, Eddie Gale, Spalter Trio, Postbox Knowledge, Scott Fields, Boston Feedbox, Jack Wright, Bob Marsh, Wolfgang Fuchs, Seth Meserole, Marco Enrid, Donald Robinson, David Slusser, SF Sound, Left Coast, Ernesto Diaz-Hernandez, Damon Smith, Jim Ryan, Tom Nunn, Doug Carroll, Compromised-Deek, Sam O'Killek, Pamela Z, Ward Trio of Alwaythe, Fuzzy Bunny, George Cremaschi and Full Throttle. There are also three improvisation workshops led by Wolfgang Fuchs, and New York film maker Veronique N. Dombé presents "Dennis A. Charles: An Interrupted Conversation". **San Francisco 21 Grand, Luggage Store Gallery and Museum Union Hall, 8-13 May, afternoons 2-3:30pm, evenings 8pm-midnight, 001 415 241 0084, www.ssfaf.org**

ULRICH/SBERGER KALEIDOPHON AUSTRIA

Hardy improvisation annual with Verjan Weston, John Edwards & Mark Sanders Trio, Nikos Velozes, Frode Gjesstad Trio, The Recedents, Joe Mann, Barre Phillips & Mat Maneri, Cecil Taylor & Tony Oxley, Les Ljungber, Jacques Demerre & Barre Phillips Trio, Dave Liebman & Wolfgang Ringer, Tippi Goss and Apparatur & Ben Gruninger. **Der Physik, Ulrich/Sberger, Jussarteil, 9-11 May, 0043 0372288 4301, jussarteil@myat.net**

VERBODINGEN-JONCTIONS 6 BELGIUM

Intuitive electronic music and arts festival focusing on improvisation and collaboration. There's brainfood too, in the form of workshops with the artists and guest lectures and all

emphases on DIY. The predominantly female sound artists include Tajiri Nonko, Kate Matthews, Andrea Neumann & Iguchi Shuck, Any Derno & Francisco López, Chantal Dumas, Anouk De Clercq & Anton Aek, Maigret Las Carnations, TMRX and Andrei Soudsky. **Brussels, 11-19 May, www.constantraw.com/vj6**

VISION FESTIVAL USA

New York City's seventh annual music and arts festival devotes itself to "A Vision Against Violence", and includes concerts, dance, film, spoken word, and visual arts, with a special Memorial Day celebration for Don Cherry. The line-up features Billy Bang, Hamid Drake, Milford Graves, Joelle Léandre, Matt Maneri, Sunny Murray, William Parker, Matthew Shipp, Pharoah Akuff, Fred Anderson, Karl Berger, Hammett Blumer, Karen Basco, Rob Brown, Dave Burrell, Roy Campbell Jr, Daniel Carter, Elliot Davis, Bill Cole, Cooper-Moore, Joseph Jarman, Edward Nodj Jordan, Oliver Lake, Andrew Laird, Kalapaziana, Maurice McIntyre, Joe McPhee, Jemelle Mosicoff, Joe Morris, Dewey Redman, Alan Silva, Sonny Simmons, Tom Tebbel, Jerome & Olyver Thomas, David S Ware and Reggie Workman. **New York City: Center of the Lounge and Anthology Film Archives, 23 May-9 June, 2011 738 1234, www.mta.info, www.visionfestival.org**

Special Events

THE CORNELIUS CARDOW CHOIR USA

San Francisco Bay Area experimental choir! group performs Cornelius Cardew's Great Learning Paragraph 7 plus Bay Area composers/performer Tom Bickley's Tuning Fork Mesquitos. **San Francisco St Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, 26 May-April, 001 415 255 8100 x12 or 510 204 0607, www.metalpress.com/artists/cardowchoir**

RESONANCE 104.4 FM LONDON

An exciting new broadcasting prospect launches on 1 May, broadcasting in Central London weekdays 5pm-1am, weekends noon-1am and Webcast via resonancefm.com. Regular contributors in May include Edwin Poutney (Tuesdays, 5-7pm), Billy Jenkins (Sundays midday-2pm), Vic Cernigoi (Fridays, 6-

6:15pm), with Joan Smet's Go! For Children Of All Ages (Thursdays, 5-6pm), Dave Draper's Improv dub sound up (Mondays, 10pm) and Some Arts Network's Offusio (Tuesdays, 11pm-1am). Magz Hall and Jim Brookhouse host the magazine show *You Are Here* each Monday at 3pm, while "Mind The Gap" (Thursdays, 9-11pm) finds The Soundarm collective dragging guests into the studio. Saturday nights from 7pm-1am are devoted to *Ching Radio*, a podcast covered by Sarah Washington with contributions from Harman Frazier, Leslie B. Spencer and others. In the "do what you like" "Clear Spot" radio art slot (weekdays, 7-9pm), guest programmes are released by Japanese turntablists Bushlatch (2 May), The Evolution Control Committee with People Like Us (3), Jess Finer (6), Ben Chant (7), Genesis Mo (8), Richard Thomas (9), Matt Fuller (10), Barbed (15), Ed Present (17), Stewart Lee (21), Steve Beresford (22), Verjan Weston (29), with others to be announced. Special contributions from Uel, Chris Cutler, Peter Cusack, Mike Cooper and limited Nosed are being scheduled. **www.resonancefm.com**

SOUNDING THE MARGINS: PAULINE OLIVEROS RETROSPECTIVE USA

Celebrating 40 years of the Deep Listening artist's work. These concerts featuring The Rova Saxophone Quartet, Deep Listening Band, Cornelius Cardow Choir, Ghost Dance Trio and a free picnic. **San Francisco Lorraine Hansberry Theater, 31 May-2 June, 001 415 388 7229, www.mendacitygallery.org**

TROLLOFFON NORWAY

The trollifon is a vintage tram carriage or trolleybus converted into a live venue for new music. This month: Oval (25 May), Alog (26), Kim Høerthay (27) Bergen. **www.lista.no/trollifon/trollifon**

THE SPIRIT OF GRAVITY UK

One day electronic music festival featuring Pilote, Muktojo, Malévol, Bukietovissians and video presentations by Scanner. **Brigantia and Free Batt, 18 May, noon-11pm, £5/£4, 01273 709709**

TAKING A LIFE FOR A WALK UK

Saxophonist Caroline Kraszel walks with her baby son through her inner London

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www.lcp.linst.ac.uk



Out There

neighbourhood playing improvised saxophone as the axes, location and times are necessarily ad-hoc, broadcast live on Resonance FM, www.resonancefm.com

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE KINGDOMS OF ELGALAND-VARGALAND SWEDEN

Anniversary celebration of the mythical country founded by CM Von Houssoff and Leif Elgjeven live performances from Pan Sene, Ocad, The Benny Nissen Jazz Quintet, Regina Lund & Marcus Davidson, Freddie Wadling, Ulf Böning, Daniel Rosenzweig, Stan Hansen, Lary 7, Per Swenson, Ingrid Engström, Jean-Louis Humbert, Mats Gustafsson & Letta Mein, Pontus Malmgren plus exhibitions and films. Stockholm: Lydmart Högst, 24-25 May, 7pm-10pm, www.lydmart.se, www.lkth.se/finstev

On Stage

ANTIPROXIMISM

Unrelatable, genre-orienting Hip-Hop act supported by new British London Mean Fiddler, 30 May

TIM BERNIE HARD CELL TRIO

Gifted saxophone player and forward thinking jazz composer brings his trio with keyboard player Craig Taborn and drummer Teri Rainer to the UK. London: The Split, 3 May, 8pm, £13/£8

CORNELIUS CARDEW TWO PIANOS

Pianists John Tibbitt and Tania Chen mark the 65th anniversary of Cardew's birth in two concerts featuring works by Schoenberg arranged by Webern, Serre arranged by Cage, Kurtág, Parsons and Cardew arranged by Dame Smith Birmingham: Adams Bault Hall (7 May), London: Warehouse (17)

DESERT MUSIC

Alt Farka Touré tribute Acti Broom and group meet Rajasthan musicians. Bath: Guildhall (19

May), Bury St Edmunds: Wingfield Arts (24), Leicester: De Montfort Hall (25), Colindale: Starlink Theatre (26), Salisbury: Festival (27 & 28), Cusipian Theatre: Mawdon (30), Swansea: Yardings (31) and London: Queen Elizabeth Hall (1 June).

ELEKTROACOUSTIC

Concert featuring three improvising electroacoustic duos: Rhodri Davies and Joel Stein (harp and electronics) and Graham Halliwell and Simon Vincent (amplified sax, feedback and computer) and Mark Wozell and Martin (amplified textures and computer feedback). London: St Cyprian Church, 21 May, 8pm, £5/£5, sound323@vol.com

FIRE MUSIC

Improving musicians Pat Thomas, Ten Hill, John Edwards and Steve Noble in an evening of music inspired as much by the sounds of free jazz as English folk and sacred music. Salford: Courtenay, The Abbey, 18 May, 8pm, £5, 01223 847401, www.theabbey.org.uk

GEOGRAPHIC LABEL NIGHT

Stephen Pastel's label showcase featuring Japan's offshoot ensemble Maher Shalal Hash Baz, acoustic improvisation from The Bill Wells Trio and pluriactive sounds from ex-Jesus & Mary Chain founders Freshcut and Sater/Vanilla performing live while The Pastels and friends man the decks. London: 93 Feet East, 1 May, 8-11.30pm, £8, 020 7247 3293, www.93feesteast.co.uk

AKEMI KUNUYOSHI ENSEMBLE

The Japanese pianist's improvising quartet with wind player Paul Moss, trumpeter Jerry Gould and percussionist Lukas Samaras. London: St Cyprian Church, 4 May, 7.30pm, £7/£5, 07900 825 115

CHEIKH LÓ

Mozart sits direct from Dakar. Leicester: De Montfort Hall (28 May), London: Cargo (29), Northampton: Roadmenders (30), North Shields: WOW Festival (2 June), Bristol:

Deckside Amphitheatre (3)

LD8 + LDI COXHILL

Actual jazzpunk duos! Lob launch their new CD, *Geography*. Support comes from Lul Coxhill (who guests on the album) in a duet with Lul's Paul Semmelink. Coxhill and guitarist Simon Hopkins also join Lob onstage later in the evening. DJs will be Dan Hill and Andy Puleston. London: Red Rose Club, 27 May, £5, www.lul.co.uk

MAHER SHALAL HASH BAZ

Inspired, oversized, loose-limbed Japanese collective mark their UK debut with a string of dates. Shilling Looth (27 April), London: 93 Feet East (1 May), Bristol: The Polish Club, with Movements and The Pastels (2), Dublin: Temple Bar Music Centre (5)

MR SCRUFF

The ever popular Mr Scruff undertakes a 23 date UK tour to coincide with a new 12" single on Ninja Tune. Bristol: Essential Festival Ashton Court (6 May), Glasgow: The Arches (9), Edinburgh: Club G4 (10), Dundee: The Reading Rooms (11), London: The Fozzie (17), Liverpool: Mosque Theatre (18), Cork: Sawtooth Theatre (23), Glasgow: Bar Cube (24), Belfast: Mamma's (25), Dublin: White Lies (26), Leeds: Arvon (29), Wrexham: Yales/Central Station (30), Sheffield: Po Na Na (31), www.mrscruff.com

MUM

Melancholic Icelandic electronica act promote their new *Fit Cat* album. London: Drongilis, 30 May, 8pm, £8.50, 0207 733 1818

NEW LONDON SILENCE

The duo of micro-trumpeter Mort Davies and production cellist Mark Wozell on a short tour. London: Conway Hall (3 May), Sheffield: venue 10 (9), Liverpool: Blackout Art Gallery (10), Derby: venue 10 (11)

NEW SWED

Showcase for Norway's Smalltown Seedpound and Sweden's Mielk labels. Appearing live are: Kim Herthly, Marko Harriwath, Andrius Tiliander, Mikael Stålvastad and Puss London:

Cargo, 1 May, 7pm-1am, £10c, www.stateofsonic.co.uk/newsread

RESNDANCE 104.4 FM LAUNCH

Free party to celebrate the launch of London's first leftfield music and radio art station. Live performances from Apache 61, Dave Dropper, Sarah Washington & Simon King and Gavin Turk, plus DJs and surprise guests. See Special Events for details of the broadcasts. London: 93 Feet East, 30 April, 8pm, free

TARAF DE HAÏDOUKS

Stunning Romanian gypsy ensemble of remarkable singers and instrumentalists. Edinburgh: Usher Hall (16 May), Brighton: Dome (20), Birmingham: Anvil (21), London: Union Chapel (22), Salisbury: City Hall (24)

LE TIGRE

Riot Grrr! renews itself for the new millennium. Nottingham: The Social, (28 May), Glasgow: King Tut's, (29), Leeds: Joseph Wells (30), London: Mean Fiddler (31), Brighton: Pavilion Theatre (1 June), www.meanfiddler.com

TURNTABLE HELL

Québécois turntablist Martin Tétreault leads this ensemble of extreme DJs in a new composition. The stellar group features Osamu Yoshida, Janek Schaefer, Manu Rosenfeld, Martin Ng, Steve Noble, Paul Hood and Leske B. Stirling: The Totebath (16), Newcastle: Arts Centre (15), Hull: Adelphi (16), Manchester: Band On The Wall (17), Colchester: Arts Centre (18), London: Queen Elizabeth Hall (20), Reading: 21 South Street: Arts Centre (21), Brighton: Concordance (22), Farnham: Ashford Arts Centre (23), Exeter: Phoenix (24), www.contraflux.org.uk

VA: A CELEBRATION OF LIVE VIDEO ART

Discussion groups, screenings and software demos, plus live performances by Coldcut & Prata TV, DJ versus VJ Audio Video Clash, Courtney Pine & Yeast, The Light Sargons and Exceeds. London: Dean, 26 May, midday-

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 9-97 PM

JOHN PEEL

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Wednesday-midnight-2am. Post-Ad and jazz

FABIO & GROOVERIDER

Friday 3-4am. Varquise from 11 base

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Hiphop flows

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday-midnight-2am. Buss culture

BBC RADIO 3 9-90 PM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10.15-midnight

New Music content.com

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm. Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10.15-11.30pm. World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11.30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

WORLD ROUTES

Friday 1-2pm

Larry Duren presents a bawlegue of global music

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 9-6.30pm

Documentary magazine

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10.45pm-1am. New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11am-midnight

Hyper-eclectic mix of avant sounds

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BBC LANCAHIRE

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 85.5 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight. The Wire's club columnist

Steve Barker mixes it up live

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95.6 FM, 148.5 MW

PMS

Sunday-midnight-2am. Electronic mix of event sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM

FROM BEDDIP TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7.05-9pm, Sunday 10.05pm-midnight

Jazz and nu-beats

CABLE RADIO 86.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday-midnight. Eclectic avant mix

KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic jazz-rock-jazz mix

FROST AND HYPE

Sunday 3-5am. Jungle

4 HERO

Monday 2-4am. Jazz/Jungle, cyber-soul, breakbeats

MATT JAM LAMONT

Wednesday 2-4am. More breakfast science

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

SOLIO STEEL

Monday-midnight-2am

Mad mixing from the Ninja Tune mix

CHARLIE GILLET

Sunday 8-10pm. World Music, roots and R&B

RANKIN! MISS P. RIDDIMS & BEATS

Saturday 10pm-midnight. Strictly nois

XFM 104.9 (LONDON)

FLO-MOTION

Sunday 9pm-midnight. Leftfield electronics

midnight. www.jsn.net

WARP MAGIC BUS TOUR

Artists include Chris Clark, Keith Lemmingswood, LFO's Mark Bell, Mira Calix, Phoenixa, Plaid, Prefuse 73, Richard Devine and Russell Hewell but change from venue to venue, so check website or with the venue. Manchester City (May 30), Glasgow Art Centre (31), Newcastle University (1 June), Sheffield Site Village (2), Birmingham Medicine Box (3), London Ekeleworks (6) and Dublin Music Centre (7). www.warprecords.com/tour/

Club Spaces

BAO TIMING

Cambridge's monthly night of digital lo-fi, minimalism, early electronics and randomness. Outdoor cabaret and DJ electronics from John Callaghan, audio anatomy from Jim, plus OGS. Cambridge The Portland, 8 May B 3pm, £3, 01223 364726. www.bao-timing.org/bao_timing.html

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Open armed mix of pop and experimentation. This month features: Longtronic's longscale muting electronics, Grace Cannon's audio visual meditation on the loss of much loved pets, trombone improviser and deconstructed Alan Tomlinson, Ghana's metal detector, light activated thesauri and PC2 effects machine ensemble, and host Richard Sanderson's introductory set of songs. London 12 Bar, 26 May, Bpm, £6, 020 7916 6989. www.bagrec.com

BLUE CAMEL

A series of a number of concerts which bring together Eastern Mediterranean and improvised music. This month, a packed bill has Viv Cornigum and Peter Cusack performing defuncted songs and samples, traditional music and improvisation from Elvin Kalimeris, Todor Bulchev and Hussein Zuhayr play on kemence, kaval and percussion, John Basser's Pocket, and Turkish songs with saz and percussion from Hussein Kaplani and Al Kagar. London Anolia Theatre, 19 May, Bpm, £6/£4, 020 7704 8374. www.anoliatheatre.com

DIALOGUE 3

Third in the current Instant Music Meeting series features Japan's premier avant jazzband Ito, BusRatch, plus minimal electronic improvisation from Iorn Chant/Paul Hood/Mark

Wastell and solo shakuhachi from Wire writer Celia Bell. London Soho, 4 May, Bpm, £7/£5, 020 7392 9032

OUTRULF SOUND

A new night showcasing Mancunian avant rock and experimental music. Featuring b-fab UK, Stay Light, Squash and The Avant Gardeners. Manchester Retro Bar, 1 May, Bpm, £3, 0161 485 3942. www.outrulf-sound.co.uk

EAT YOUR OWN CARS

Big Bros (Steve Colby DJ set), Pressure Crisp, Depth Charge (Jo Saul Kane) The Sublimus Soundsystem and Play Label Ols. Plus live performances from Sweden's The Mighty Quark and Japan's Quartz Jubli. London 93 Feet East, 17 May, Bpm, £8, 020 7247 3293. www.93feeteast.co.uk

EXTRA

Regular slow sound system club ruining the image of digitala. Decks, electronics and effects from Irakli & Albert and Ladytron's Dastmash, plus digital photo treatments exhibition and Flash manipulations. London The Foundry, 12 May 3pm-later, free, 020 7739 6900. www.soundsund.net

FREE RADICALS

Improvised music from Charlotte Hug & John Bushner and Tony Bevan, Ben Wren & Tony Marsh. London Red Rose Club, 1 May B 15pm, £5, 020 7263 7265

KLINKER

Improv and off the wall music. Rock Improv from Voltage with special guest Alan Wilkinson and New (2 May), Jay Suttie, Evolve featuring Charles Hayward and friends, Bicycle Clip Sea, Ed Hughes with the films of James Holcombe and Hugh Metcalfe (9), MIDI cellist Daniel Weaver, Ursula Menster from Canada, Michael Kosmides & Dave Fowler and Lemon Squeeze (16), Vernon Weston & Hugh Metcalfe's Skop, John Grivey/Jim Dunslop/Marcos Matos/Dave Fowler and Richard Sanderson (23), Eddie Pivots/Ross Lambert/Tim Blackwell, Lyle Madrigal & Darren Morris (30), special Winter Part in Guy and Ad Hoc Band (31), Lendle The Sussex, Bpm, £4/£3, 020 8806 8216. www.theklinker.freemove.co.uk

KOSMISCHE

Real solo set from ex-This Heat drummer Charles Hayward performing intense songs new and old, plus support, DJs and projections. London Upstairs at the Garage, 25 May, 9pm-3am, £6/5, www.kosmische.org

THE LISTENING ROOM

Monthly Liverpoolian New Music night.

Improvers Phil Morton, Adam Webster, Neil Murphy, Mole and Phil Lucking take Twilight as their theme and inspiration. Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, 18 May, 7:30-9pm, free. www.livpoolbluecoat.co.uk/itv.htm

RARE MUSIC CLUB

Free improvisation from drum runner and pianist Keith Toppin in a duo with drummer Peter Fawcough, plus contemporary classical works from Bortoli to Berio by violinists David Le Page & Malcolm Aibel and roots acts to be confirmed. Bristol QOM Theatre, Bristol, 10 May, £10/£7, 7:30pm, 012823 432483. www.raremusicclub.co.uk

SOUND 323

Afternoon improvisation concert in a record shop basement. Joel Stern on computer in a duo with guitarist Anthony Guerra. London Sound 323, 18 May, 3pm, £3, 020 8348 9595. www.sound323.com

THE SPRAWL

Monthly oddities, soundscapes and eclectic sounds in an internet bar. Post David Tudor live electronics performer Matt Ragliskis plus laptop improviser Matt perform live while producer and ex-flying Lowndes Cunningham Ols alongside the regulars and live image processing. London Global Cafe, 9 May, 7:30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 020 7287 2242. www.dluse.com/srawl/

XEN

Ninja Tune label monthly Chris Bowden and Ma Master Mors live plus Chromatic Orchestra's Jason Swinscoe on the decks. London Cargo, 30 May, 7pm-1am, £7

XUAIVE

This month's name for the Bohmae Brothers' new space - note new venue details. Pre-digital noise making devices orchestrated by Brown Sierra, poetry by Iori Kallie and a new two of Rob Mills/Paul Hood/Noel Coyne-Ormus (6 May), improvising duos Chris Bowden/James Dunn and Tim Gaskin/Martin and the Motion Sickness Mayette show (20) and an "unforgivable" evening with the Bohmae Brothers Extended Family, London Wheatheaf Hall, Bpm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

Incognito

BRIAN WILSON

UK

The Beach Boy original returns to London after his sell out dates at the start of the year. London Royal Festival Hall, 9-10 June, 7:30pm, 020

7960 4242. www.rfh.org.uk

LMC'S ELEVENTH ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

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